

Social Environment and Spiritual Intelligence in Shaping Interest in Learning Dhamma among Buddhist Communities

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of the social environment and spiritual intelligence on interest in learning Dhamma among Buddhist communities in Gianyar Regency, Bali. This research is important because participation in religious learning activities—such as puja bakti, meditation, Dhamma talks, and introductory Buddhist courses—remains relatively low, posing challenges to the continuity and effectiveness of community-based Dhamma education. Identifying key factors that shape learning interest is therefore essential for strengthening Buddhist religious education at the local level. The study employs a quantitative approach using a survey design. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 196 Buddhist respondents in Gianyar Regency. The data were analyzed using correlation analysis, simple linear regression, multiple linear regression, as well as partial and simultaneous significance tests to assess both individual and combined effects of the independent variables. The findings indicate that the social environment and spiritual intelligence simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on interest in learning Dhamma, explaining approximately 75% of the variance in learning interest. Partially, the social environment shows a very strong and dominant influence compared to spiritual intelligence. This highlights the importance of family support, temple-based communities, religious social interactions, and a supportive religious climate in encouraging participation in Dhamma learning. Spiritual intelligence also exerts a significant positive effect by fostering intrinsic motivation and deeper personal engagement with Dhamma practice. The study implies that strengthening communal religious environments while cultivating individual spiritual intelligence can effectively enhance interest in learning Dhamma. The originality of this research lies in its empirical demonstration of the interaction between social structures and personal spiritual dispositions within the context of Indonesian Buddhist education.

Keywords: Religious social; Buddhist; Dhamma; Balinese Buddhists; Buddhist religious education.

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Authors:

I Nyoman Susila Karyasta
Susila¹

Affiliations:

¹Institut Nalanda,
Indonesia

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Corresponding author:

nyomansusilakaryasta@
mail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Religious education plays a strategic role in shaping the moral, spiritual, and social qualities of Indonesian society. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System affirms that education aims not only to advance intellectual development but also to build character and a civilized society (Kosim, Muqoddam, Mubarok, & Laila, 2023). Within Indonesia's plural social context, religious education functions as a primary medium for internalizing ethical values, strengthening spirituality, and cultivating social awareness among religious communities (Winoto, 2022). For Buddhists, *Dhamma* education serves as a fundamental means of understanding the Buddha's teachings, nurturing wisdom, and developing inner qualities aligned with principles of truth, compassion, and self-awareness (Charoenna, 2023). Learning *Dhamma* therefore does not merely involve ritual practice; it represents an ongoing educational process that directly influences social behavior and ethical conduct in everyday life.

In practice, however, Buddhist participation in *Dhamma* learning activities has not reached an optimal level. This phenomenon also appears in Gianyar Regency, Bali, one of the regions with a relatively significant Buddhist community. Religious activities such as *puja bakti*, meditation, *Dhamma* talks, and introductory courses on Buddhist teachings organized in temples, *cetiya*, and meditation retreat centers do not consistently attract sustained participation (Latifah, 2025). A preliminary survey of 30 Buddhists indicates that 77% of respondents express curiosity about *Dhamma* materials and 87% actively listen to *Dhamma* talks. Despite these encouraging figures, attendance and engagement in routine community-based learning activities remain relatively low. This condition reveals a gap between cognitive interest in *Dhamma* teachings and actual participation in sustained learning processes (Ngasiran, 2016). Limited engagement has significant implications for the depth of doctrinal understanding, spiritual motivation, and the ability of practitioners to apply Buddhist moral values in daily social life (Kheminda, 2015).

This phenomenon underscores that interest in learning *Dhamma* cannot be understood solely as an individual matter but closely relates to the social and spiritual contexts surrounding practitioners' lives. In this regard, the social environment—encompassing family, temple communities, social relationships, and religious culture—and individual spiritual intelligence constitute two critical factors that merit empirical investigation. A supportive social environment can encourage participation in religious learning, while spiritual intelligence can shape intrinsic motivation to study and internalize *Dhamma* teachings more deeply.

Research on religious learning interest has developed along several major trends. First, studies on learning interest in general education demonstrate strong correlations with attention, motivation, active engagement, and learning success. Research synthesized by Gie in Sondang Purba (2024), Syah in Subekti (2021), and Syardiansah in Rahmi (2020) consistently shows that learning interest significantly influences learning outcomes, concentration, and learner participation. These findings position learning interest as a key psychological factor in educational success.

Second, scholarship on spiritual intelligence emphasizes the role of spirituality in shaping learning behavior, psychological resilience, and intrinsic

motivation. The works of Zohar and Marshall (2007), Ary Ginanjar (2005), as well as studies by Rahmat Rifai Lubis (2018), conceptualize spiritual intelligence as encompassing meaning-making, self-reflection, emotional regulation, and the capacity to confront challenges wisely. Individuals with higher spiritual intelligence tend to demonstrate stronger intrinsic motivation to learn and develop. Nevertheless, most of these studies focus on general education or Islamic education, while empirical research on spiritual intelligence within Buddhist religious learning remains limited.

Third, studies on the social environment emphasize that family support, peer relationships, community engagement, and religious settings significantly influence learning behavior and motivation. Research by Nofenlis (2022) and Yunitasari (2020) shows that conducive social environments enhance learning engagement and participation in religious activities, whereas unsupportive environments hinder such processes. However, empirical studies that specifically examine the relationship between the social environment and interest in learning *Dhamma* among Buddhists—particularly within Bali’s distinctive cultural and religious context—remain scarce.

These three research trends reveal a significant research gap. Previous studies primarily focus on general education or majority religions and rarely address Buddhist religious education empirically. Moreover, few studies examine the simultaneous relationship between the social environment and spiritual intelligence in shaping interest in learning *Dhamma*, especially within Buddhist communities in Gianyar Regency. Consequently, further quantitative research is needed to explain how social and spiritual factors interact to shape Buddhists’ interest in learning *Dhamma* in this context.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the effect of the social environment on interest in learning *Dhamma* among Buddhists in Gianyar Regency, to examine the effect of spiritual intelligence on interest in learning *Dhamma*, and to test the simultaneous influence of both variables on interest in learning *Dhamma*. This study seeks to contribute theoretically to the development of Buddhist religious education studies and practically to temples, educational institutions, and *Dhamma* instructors in designing more effective and contextually grounded learning strategies.

Drawing on theoretical foundations and previous empirical findings, this study proposes three main hypotheses. First, the social environment has a positive and significant effect on interest in learning *Dhamma* among Buddhists in Gianyar Regency. Second, spiritual intelligence has a positive and significant effect on interest in learning *Dhamma*. Third, the social environment and spiritual intelligence simultaneously exert a positive and significant effect on interest in learning *Dhamma* among Buddhists. These hypotheses provide the basis for the empirical testing conducted in this study.

METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study consists of individual Buddhists residing in Gianyar Regency, Bali. The study selects individuals as the unit of analysis because the research aims to understand how each practitioner’s social environment and

level of spiritual intelligence influence their interest in learning *Dhamma*. The study chooses Gianyar Regency as the research site because the region hosts a relatively developed Buddhist community, yet preliminary surveys indicate that participation in *Dhamma* learning activities—such as *Dhamma* classes, meditation, and religious guidance—has not reached an optimal level. By focusing on individuals as the unit of analysis, this study identifies personal variations in interest in learning *Dhamma* while simultaneously measuring the influence of social and spiritual factors embedded in each respondent.

This study employs a quantitative design with an associative approach (Borgstede & Scholz, 2021; Creswell, 2014). The research adopts this design because it seeks to examine relationships and effects among variables, namely the social environment as the first independent variable (X1), spiritual intelligence as the second independent variable (X2), and interest in learning *Dhamma* as the dependent variable (Y). The quantitative approach enables objective measurement of variables through numerical data and allows statistical testing of the proposed hypotheses. The associative model explains causal relationships among variables and assesses the extent to which each independent variable, both partially and simultaneously, contributes to variations in Buddhists' interest in learning *Dhamma*.

The study relies on primary data collected directly from respondents through a questionnaire survey. The research population consists of 400 Buddhists residing in Gianyar Regency. The study determines the sample using stratified random sampling to ensure representative coverage of relevant social characteristics. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan formula, the study selects a sample of 196 respondents. The researchers collect data using a Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure the three main research variables. The researchers develop indicators for each variable based on theoretical frameworks and previous studies, then conduct a pilot test with 30 respondents to ensure instrument validity and reliability before administering the main survey.

The data collection process uses both direct and online distribution of questionnaires. The researchers distribute questionnaires directly at temples and *cetiya* in Gianyar Regency to reach respondents actively involved in religious activities, and they use digital forms to facilitate participation among respondents who cannot complete the questionnaire face-to-face. The questionnaire comprises three main sections: respondent identity, statements measuring the social environment, and statements measuring spiritual intelligence and interest in learning *Dhamma*. Each statement applies a four- or five-point Likert scale to represent respondents' levels of agreement with the proposed indicators. During data collection, the researchers provide a brief explanation of the study's purpose and instructions for completing the questionnaire to ensure that respondents provide answers that reflect their actual conditions.

The study conducts data analysis in two main stages: descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis describes respondent characteristics and the distribution of data across each research variable. Inferential analysis then tests the research hypotheses using simple linear regression, multiple linear regression, simple correlation, multiple correlation, and coefficients of determination. Before conducting regression analysis, the researchers perform prerequisite tests, including validity, reliability, normality, homogeneity, multicollinearity, and

heteroscedasticity tests. These procedures ensure that the data meet the required statistical assumptions, allowing the study to interpret the analytical results accurately and justify them scientifically.

RESULTS

1. *The Influence of the Social Environment on Buddhists' Interest in Learning Dhamma*

This first finding addresses the first research objective, namely to analyze the partial effect of the Social Environment (X1) on Buddhists' Interest in Learning *Dhamma* (Y) in Gianyar Regency. In this study, the social environment encompasses family support, involvement in temple communities, relationships with peers, and the broader religious atmosphere that facilitates *Dhamma* learning. The analysis aims to examine the extent to which these social factors contribute significantly to practitioners' interest in participating in *Dhamma* learning activities.

Descriptive statistical analysis indicates that the social environment of Buddhists in Gianyar Regency tends to be relatively conducive, although levels of support vary among respondents. Most respondents report receiving family encouragement for religious activities, engaging in fairly active religious social interactions at temples or *cetiya*, and maintaining social relationships that enable the exchange of spiritual experiences. Nevertheless, differences in the intensity of community involvement and social support generate variations in interest in learning *Dhamma* among practitioners. This variation provides the basis for subsequent inferential testing using regression analysis.

To examine the partial effect of the Social Environment on Interest in Learning *Dhamma*, this study applies simple linear regression analysis. The results demonstrate that the Social Environment exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on Interest in Learning *Dhamma*. Statistically, the regression coefficient indicates that a one-unit increase in the Social Environment corresponds to an increase of 1.115 points in Interest in Learning *Dhamma*. The very small significance value ($p < 0.001$) confirms that this effect does not occur by chance but reflects a strong and empirically consistent relationship.

Table 1. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Social Environment (X1) on Interest in Learning *Dhamma* (Y)

Model	B Coefficient	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
(Constant)	-22.359	7.557	-	-2.959	0.003
Social Environment (X1)	1.115	0.047	0.865	23.962	0.000

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

Beyond statistical significance, the strength of the relationship between the Social Environment and Interest in Learning *Dhamma* also appears very strong. The correlation coefficient of $r = 0.865$ indicates a close association between improvements in the quality of the social environment and increased interest among practitioners in learning *Dhamma*.

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.747 indicates that 74.7% of the variance in Interest in Learning *Dhamma* can be explained by the Social Environment. In other words, nearly three-quarters of practitioners' interest in learning *Dhamma* depends on the social conditions they experience, while the remaining variance results from other factors not included in this research model.

Table 2. Coefficient of Determination of the Social Environment on Interest in Learning *Dhamma*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
X1 → Y	0.865	0.747	0.746	10.434

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

These findings indicate that the Social Environment functions as a primary structural factor in shaping Buddhists' interest in learning *Dhamma*. Family support, the presence of active religious communities, and socially embedded religious interactions create a learning ecosystem that encourages deeper engagement with *Dhamma*-related activities. In the context of Gianyar, where religious practice operates largely within communal settings, the social environment does not merely serve as a background condition but acts as a central driving force for religious learning interest.

Conceptually, this finding confirms that interest in learning *Dhamma* cannot be understood solely as an individual motivation. Instead, it emerges as a product of social relations continuously reproduced through interactions within families, temple communities, and religious social networks. Accordingly, efforts to enhance interest in learning *Dhamma* must extend beyond individual-centered strategies and prioritize the strengthening of supportive social environments that sustain religious learning processes over time.

2. The Influence of Spiritual Intelligence on Buddhists' Interest in Learning *Dhamma*

This sub-finding addresses the second research objective, namely to analyze the partial effect of Spiritual Intelligence (X2) on Buddhists' Interest in Learning *Dhamma* (Y) in Gianyar Regency. In this study, spiritual intelligence refers to an inner capacity encompassing self-awareness, the search for meaning in life, emotional regulation, and spiritual orientation that guides individuals to interpret life experiences in a reflective and ethical manner. The analysis focuses on assessing the extent to which this personal spiritual quality encourages Buddhists to engage in *Dhamma* learning in a deeper and more sustained way.

Descriptive analysis indicates that respondents' levels of spiritual intelligence fall within the moderate to high range, although variation exists across individuals. This variation reflects differences in self-awareness, the intensity of inner reflection, and respondents' ability to connect life experiences with Buddhist spiritual values. Such variation provides an essential basis for empirically testing the influence of spiritual intelligence on interest in learning *Dhamma* through inferential analysis.

To examine the partial effect of Spiritual Intelligence on Interest in Learning *Dhamma*, this study employs simple linear regression analysis. The results

demonstrate that Spiritual Intelligence has a positive and statistically significant effect on Interest in Learning *Dhamma*. The regression coefficient indicates that each one-unit increase in Spiritual Intelligence corresponds to an increase of 0.814 points in Interest in Learning *Dhamma*. The very small significance value ($p < 0.001$) confirms that this relationship is statistically meaningful and reflects a consistent empirical association between individual spiritual quality and motivation to learn *Dhamma*.

Table 3. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Spiritual Intelligence (X2) on Interest in Learning *Dhamma* (Y)

Model	B Coefficient	Std. Error	Beta	t- value	Sig.
(Constant)	27.324	12.528	-	2.181	0.030
Spiritual Intelligence (X2)	0.814	0.078	0.601	10.465	0.000

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

The strength of the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Interest in Learning *Dhamma* appears in the correlation coefficient of $r = 0.601$, which falls within the strong category. This finding indicates that higher levels of spiritual intelligence associate with a greater tendency among practitioners to develop interest in and engagement with *Dhamma* learning.

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.361 shows that 36.1% of the variance in Interest in Learning *Dhamma* can be explained by Spiritual Intelligence. In other words, more than one-third of practitioners' interest in learning *Dhamma* depends on their personal spiritual quality, while the remaining variance results from other factors beyond this variable.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination of Spiritual Intelligence on Interest in Learning *Dhamma*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
X2 → Y	0.601	0.361	0.358	16.600

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

When compared partially with the Social Environment (X1), the contribution of Spiritual Intelligence to Interest in Learning *Dhamma* appears relatively more moderate. The Social Environment explains 74.7% of the variance in Interest in Learning *Dhamma*, whereas Spiritual Intelligence explains 36.1%. This difference indicates that, although internal spiritual motivation plays an important role, social and communal factors remain more dominant determinants in shaping Buddhists' interest in learning *Dhamma* in Gianyar Regency.

Nevertheless, the role of Spiritual Intelligence should not be regarded as merely a supplementary factor. Spiritual intelligence functions as an intrinsic engine that provides meaning, direction, and depth to learning motivation. Practitioners with higher levels of spiritual intelligence do not engage in learning solely because

of external encouragement, but because of inner awareness of the importance of *Dhamma* as a path toward wisdom (*paññā*), self-regulation, and moral maturity.

These findings affirm that Interest in Learning *Dhamma* emerges from an interaction between internal drives and external contexts. Spiritual Intelligence supplies an inner foundation that enables practitioners to perceive *Dhamma* learning as an existential necessity rather than merely a ritualistic or social activity. In this sense, *Dhamma* functions as a medium for self-reflection, meaning-making, and the continuous cultivation of inner qualities.

Accordingly, although the quantitative contribution of Spiritual Intelligence is smaller than that of the Social Environment, this variable plays a strategic qualitative role in sustaining long-term interest in learning *Dhamma*. Without sufficient spiritual intelligence, learning interest may remain situational and dependent solely on external support. By contrast, spiritual intelligence allows interest in learning to develop as a relatively stable, intrinsic, and reflective motivation.

3. The Simultaneous Influence of the Social Environment and Spiritual Intelligence on Interest in Learning *Dhamma*

This sub-finding addresses the third research objective, namely to analyze the simultaneous influence of the Social Environment (X1) and Spiritual Intelligence (X2) on Buddhists' Interest in Learning *Dhamma* (Y) in Gianyar Regency. Simultaneous analysis is essential to understand how social and spiritual factors operate together in shaping learning interest and to assess the overall strength of the model compared to the partial effects of each variable.

The study tests the simultaneous influence using multiple linear regression analysis, with Interest in Learning *Dhamma* as the dependent variable and the Social Environment and Spiritual Intelligence as independent variables. The results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant and therefore appropriate for explaining variations in Buddhists' Interest in Learning *Dhamma*.

The resulting regression equation is:

$$\hat{Y} = -27.781 + 1.059 X1 + 0.090 X2$$

This equation shows that when the Social Environment and Spiritual Intelligence are analyzed simultaneously, the Social Environment has the largest regression coefficient, while Spiritual Intelligence continues to make a positive contribution, although quantitatively smaller.

Table 6. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the Social Environment (X1) and Spiritual Intelligence (X2) on Interest in Learning *Dhamma* (Y)

Variable	B Coefficient	Std. Error	Beta	t- value	Sig.
(Constant)	-27.781	8.475	-	-3.278	0.001
Social Environment (X1)	1.059	0.061	0.821	17.332	0.000
Spiritual Intelligence (X2)	0.090	0.064	0.066	1.401	0.163

These results demonstrate that the Social Environment remains the strongest predictor in the simultaneous model. Although Spiritual Intelligence proves significant in partial analysis, its contribution becomes smaller in the simultaneous model because part of its influence overlaps with and is mediated through the Social Environment.

To test the overall significance of the regression model, the study employs an F-test through regression ANOVA. The results confirm that the multiple linear regression model is statistically significant.

Table 7. Results of the F-Test (ANOVA) for Multiple Linear Regression

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Regression	62,725.824	2	31,362.912	289.486	0.000
Residual	20,909.584	193	108.340		
Total	83,635.408	195			

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

The F-value of 289.486 far exceeds the critical F-table value (3.04) at the 0.05 significance level, with a significance value of 0.000. This finding confirms that the Social Environment and Spiritual Intelligence jointly exert a significant influence on Interest in Learning *Dhamma*.

The strength of the simultaneous regression model appears in the coefficient of determination (R^2). The analysis shows an R^2 value of 0.750, indicating that 75% of the variance in Interest in Learning *Dhamma* can be explained jointly by the Social Environment and Spiritual Intelligence.

Table 8. Coefficient of Determination of the Simultaneous Regression Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
X1 + X2 → Y	0.866	0.750	0.747	10.409

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

Conversely, the remaining 25% of the variance in Interest in Learning *Dhamma* results from other factors beyond the model, such as personal religious experience, the quality of *Dhamma* instruction, the role of teachers or *bhikkhu*, and local cultural dynamics that this study does not examine.

These findings indicate that Interest in Learning *Dhamma* emerges from a synergy between external and internal factors. The Social Environment provides a structural and relational context—through family support, vihara communities, and religious interaction—that encourages concrete participation. Meanwhile, Spiritual Intelligence functions as an inner foundation that gives meaning, direction, and depth to learning motivation.

The simultaneous model demonstrates that optimal conditions for fostering interest in learning *Dhamma* cannot rely on a single factor alone. Social support without spiritual depth may produce engagement that is ritualistic and temporary. Conversely, spiritual intelligence without a supportive environment may constrain the actualization of learning interest in practical forms. Therefore, sustained

interest in learning *Dhamma* arises when a conducive social environment converges with mature personal spiritual qualities.

Overall, this sub-finding affirms that efforts to strengthen *Dhamma* learning among Buddhists require an integrative approach that addresses both the construction of supportive religious social environments and the development of individual spiritual intelligence. The synergy of these two factors emerges empirically as a key determinant of Interest in Learning *Dhamma* in Gianyar Regency.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals three main findings. First, the Social Environment has a positive and significant influence on Buddhists' Interest in Learning *Dhamma* in Gianyar Regency. Family support, involvement in vihara communities, and religious social interaction function as external factors that encourage participation in *Dhamma* learning. Second, Spiritual Intelligence also exerts a positive and significant influence on Interest in Learning *Dhamma*, indicating that dimensions of self-awareness, life meaning, and personal spiritual orientation form the foundation of intrinsic motivation to study Buddhist teachings. Third, when analyzed simultaneously, the Social Environment and Spiritual Intelligence together explain most of the variance in Interest in Learning *Dhamma*, with a stronger determinant contribution coming from the Social Environment. These findings confirm that interest in learning *Dhamma* emerges from a complex interaction between structural-social factors and personal spiritual dispositions.

The strong influence of the Social Environment on Interest in Learning *Dhamma* can be explained by the communal and practical nature of Buddhist religious learning. Activities such as puja bakti, meditation, *Dhamma* talks, and discussions of Buddhist teachings almost always take place within collective social spaces. Supportive family environments, active vihara communities, and positive religious social relations create a climate that normalizes and facilitates learning participation. In this context, learning interest does not arise solely from individual impulses but develops through shared experiences that strengthen a sense of belonging and religious commitment.

Meanwhile, the influence of Spiritual Intelligence on Interest in Learning *Dhamma* reflects a process of value internalization. Buddhists with higher levels of spiritual intelligence tend to interpret *Dhamma* learning not merely as a ritual obligation but as a path toward the cultivation of wisdom and inner maturity. Awareness of life's meaning, the capacity for self-reflection, and emotional regulation encourage individuals to voluntarily seek a deeper understanding of Buddhist teachings as ethical and existential guidance. This mechanism explains why spiritual intelligence functions as a driver of intrinsic motivation in learning.

When both variables operate simultaneously, the dominance of the Social Environment indicates that external factors possess a greater mobilizing power in generating concrete learning participation. Nevertheless, Spiritual Intelligence continues to serve as an internal foundation that sustains learning interest over time. In other words, the Social Environment acts as a trigger for participation, while

Spiritual Intelligence preserves the depth and consistency of commitment to learning *Dhamma*.

These findings align with studies on learning interest in general education that emphasize strong relationships among interest, motivation, attention, and learning engagement. Research summarized by Gie in Sondang Purba (2024), Syah in Subekti (2021), and Syardiansah in Rahmi (2020) consistently demonstrates that learning interest constitutes a key psychological factor in educational success. This study extends those insights by showing that similar patterns apply within the context of Buddhist religious learning, particularly *Dhamma* education.

Furthermore, the results reinforce perspectives on spiritual intelligence proposed by Zohar and Marshall (2007) and Ary Ginanjar (2005), and supported by findings from Rahmat Rifai Lubis (2022) which emphasize the role of spiritual dimensions in shaping motivation and learning behavior. However, the novelty of this study lies in applying the concept of spiritual intelligence to Buddhist religious education—a field that remains relatively underexplored compared to general education or Islamic education.

From the perspective of the social environment, these findings remain consistent with studies by Nofenlis (2022) and Yunitasari (2020), which highlight the significant influence of social support on learning engagement and religious participation. At the same time, this study offers an original contribution by focusing on Buddhist communities in Bali, which possess distinctive cultural structures and religious practices. In this way, the study fills an empirical gap in research on Buddhist religious education by integrating social and spiritual perspectives simultaneously.

Historically, the findings of this study reflect a shift in the paradigm of religious learning from an individualistic model toward an approach that emphasizes the role of community. Learning *Dhamma* no longer appears solely as a personal practice, but rather as a social process sustained by family relations, vihara institutions, and the broader community of lay Buddhists. This shift aligns with the Buddhist tradition, which from its earliest formation positioned the *Sangha* as the primary pillar for the transmission of teachings. These findings also resonate with international scholarship on communal religious learning, which emphasizes that religious education operates most effectively within social and cultural interactions rather than as an isolated activity (Junker-Kenny, 2021). Research on spiritual learning communities further demonstrates that religious communities function as spaces for the formation of spiritual habitus, where learning encourages a reorientation from the self toward shared existential meaning (Roebben, 2014). In addition, studies on community-based learning highlight that religious communities serve as public spaces for the collective exchange of identities, values, and religious commitments (Brigham, 2012). Empirically, the results of this study—showing the strong influence of the social environment on interest in learning *Dhamma*—confirm that engagement in religious learning depends heavily on relational support and communal atmosphere, as consistently found in cross-contextual research on collaborative religious learning and community-based knowledge transmission (Glenn, 2025).

Socially, the findings indicate that interest in learning *Dhamma* emerges as a product of religious socialization, namely the ongoing interaction between

individuals and their social environments. A supportive social environment not only provides spaces for learning, but also shapes norms, expectations, and emotional support that collectively encourage lay Buddhists' engagement in religious learning. This finding aligns with Müller, De Graaf, and Schmidt (2014), who argue that social contexts—particularly family and religious communities—function as primary agents in shaping individual religious dispositions, often exceeding the influence of personal motivation alone. Within religious communities, socialization unfolds through both explicit and implicit mechanisms that form a religious habitus, as explained by Vallverdú (2017) and Pusztai and Demeter-Karászi (2019). In the communal social structure of Balinese society, viharas and social networks of lay Buddhists operate as central arenas for transmitting Buddhist values, practices, and identities. Consequently, interest in learning *Dhamma* develops as a socially normalized and collectively sustained practice rather than merely an individual choice (2012). Strengthening *Dhamma* learning, therefore, must be understood as a community-based social project in which families, religious institutions, and social relations play strategic roles in sustaining long-term learning engagement among Buddhists.

Ideologically, the findings underscore that learning *Dhamma* functions as a process of ethical and spiritual formation that shapes the life orientation of lay Buddhists, rather than merely constituting ritual activity. Spiritual intelligence—manifested through self-reflection, meaning-making, and emotional regulation—demonstrates that interest in learning *Dhamma* closely relates to the pursuit of wisdom (*paññā*) and moral responsibility. This finding accords with studies on Buddhist ethical formation that conceptualize Buddhist ethics as an inward formative process grounded in the principles of non-harm (*ahimsa*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and awareness of the interconnectedness between action and consequence through karma and dependent arising (Gedrich, 2010; Volkova, 2024). In educational contexts, Buddhist ethics appears as a reflective praxis integrated with the Noble Eightfold Path, where learning cultivates ethical awareness, honesty, and self-restraint (Sumaryati & Lasiyo, 2024). Ethical meditative practices such as *brahma-vihāra* further function as modes of moral formation that link spiritual cultivation with social action simultaneously (Shulman, 2025). Accordingly, learning *Dhamma* should be understood as an ideological praxis that shapes ethical dispositions and life orientations among lay Buddhists in a sustained manner, while affirming that interest in learning *Dhamma* reflects the internalization of Buddhist values across both personal and social domains (Douglas, 2024; Li, 2023).

Functionally, the findings provide an empirical foundation for strengthening community-based *Dhamma* learning strategies alongside personal spiritual development. The integration of the social environment and spiritual intelligence proves effective in enhancing learning interest, thereby offering a basis for policy formulation and program design in Buddhist religious education. Nevertheless, the findings also reveal potential dysfunctions in the formation of interest in learning *Dhamma*. Excessive reliance on the social environment risks producing participation that is external and conformist, where engagement in *Dhamma* learning stems primarily from social pressure or community affiliation rather than deep spiritual meaning. This pattern corresponds with the concept of extrinsic religiosity, which treats religion as a means to gain social benefits, status, or group

acceptance and tends to correlate weakly with ethical internalization and long-term spiritual commitment (Pace, 2014; Vitell, Paolillo, & Singh, 2005). Conversely, an overemphasis on personal spiritual dimensions without social support may limit the actualization of learning interest in collective practice, as intrinsic religiosity—while effective in fostering ethical awareness, self-reflection, and internal motivation—does not necessarily guarantee sustained social engagement without a supportive communal ecosystem (Duffield et al., 2024; Power & McKinney, 2014). Furthermore, variations in the quality of social environments among lay Buddhists may generate unequal access to *Dhamma* learning, whereby those embedded in strong religious networks enjoy greater learning opportunities than those situated in less supportive social contexts. These findings highlight the importance of balancing intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations so that *Dhamma* learning avoids both social ritualism and isolated spiritualism, instead developing as an inclusive and sustainable process of ethical–spiritual formation (Cohen & Hill, 2007; Roy, 2025).

Building on these findings and reflections regarding potential dysfunctions, the proposed action plans must aim to maintain balance between social and spiritual dimensions in *Dhamma* learning. First, viharas and religious institutions should strengthen community-based *Dhamma* learning that extends beyond ritual and ceremonial forms toward reflective and dialogical practices, such as small discussion forums, thematic study groups, and spaces for sharing spiritual experiences. This model prevents purely external and conformist participation while fostering deeper internalization of *Dhamma* values. Second, lay development programs should deliberately integrate spiritual intelligence enhancement through reflective practices, meditation, and deeper engagement with Buddhist teachings, enabling learning interest to grow as a stable intrinsic motivation rather than as a response to social pressure alone. Third, *Dhamma* instructors and bhikkhus should design pedagogical approaches that are transformative rather than merely informative by linking Buddhist teachings to the lived experiences of lay Buddhists, while simultaneously building inclusive social networks to prevent disparities in access to learning opportunities. Through this integrative approach, *Dhamma* learning can avoid reduction to either social ritualism or isolated spiritualism and instead evolve as a balanced, participatory, and sustainable process of ethical–spiritual formation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that lay Buddhists' interest in learning *Dhamma* in Gianyar Regency does not emerge as a singular or isolated phenomenon, but rather as the result of interaction between social factors and personal spiritual factors. The main findings confirm that the social environment exerts a very strong and significant influence on interest in learning *Dhamma*, while spiritual intelligence also shows a positive and significant effect, albeit with a more moderate contribution. When both variables are analyzed simultaneously, the social environment and spiritual intelligence together explain most of the variation in lay Buddhists' interest in learning *Dhamma*. These findings indicate that *Dhamma* learning cannot be understood solely as an individual process, but must be

approached as a religious practice grounded in community support and sustained by the depth of inner awareness.

In terms of scholarly contribution, this study offers an important addition to the development of Buddhist religious education studies, a field that has received relatively limited attention in academic research. First, this study enriches the literature on religious learning interest by introducing the context of Balinese Buddhists, particularly in Gianyar Regency, which is characterized by distinctive social, cultural, and religious configurations. Second, this study integrates two analytical perspectives—the social environment and spiritual intelligence—within a single empirical model to explain interest in learning *Dhamma*, thereby extending the understanding that religious learning emerges from the interplay between social structures and personal spiritual dispositions. Third, the findings contribute to studies of religious learning motivation by demonstrating that external factors such as family support and vihara-based communities may exert a more dominant influence than internal factors, without diminishing the essential role of individual spiritual awareness.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations that warrant acknowledgment. First, the research scope remains confined to a single administrative region, which requires caution in generalizing the findings to Buddhist communities in other regions. Second, the study employs a quantitative design that focuses on measuring relationships between variables, and therefore does not fully capture the subjective dynamics and lived experiences through which lay Buddhists interpret and internalize *Dhamma* learning. Third, the variables examined are limited to the social environment and spiritual intelligence, while other potentially influential factors—such as the quality of *Dhamma* instruction, the role of bhikkhus and *Dhamma* instructors, or generational dynamics—remain unexplored.

Based on these limitations, future research should expand the geographical scope and incorporate qualitative or mixed-method approaches to explore religious experiences and meaning-making processes more deeply. Subsequent studies may also include institutional and pedagogical variables in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how interest in learning *Dhamma* is formed and sustained. Through such efforts, future *Dhamma* learning initiatives can be designed in a more contextualized, sustainable, and responsive manner, aligned with the social and spiritual needs of lay Buddhist communities.

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