



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Happiness, social fantasy, and the Indonesian novel

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ABSTRACT

Recent debate on Indonesian literary criticism seems disinclined to discuss “happiness” in its fundamental context. This study investigates why happiness proves challenging to incorporate as a primary subject in literary works. The prominent focus and originality of this study is the role of happiness concerning the social position, characters, and setting within the narrative structure. Six works: *Sitti Nurbaya*, *Salah Asuhan*, *Belenggu*, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, *Wasripin dan Satinah*, and *Bumi Manusia* represent storytelling that infrequently portrays happiness. Within these works, a qualitative approach is used in selecting data based on purposive sampling. On the one hand, the analysis requires a conceptual framework on happiness that is grounded in *eudaimonia* and its subsequent derivative concepts. *Eudaimonia* translates as “flourishing” or “well-being” and is often equated with living wisely. On the other hand, Žižek’s theory of social fantasy also assists this research by exploring how narratives shape our understanding of the social environment. A fantasy that “teaches us how to desire”. The analysis shows that the characters in those novels have the potential to achieve happiness. Nevertheless, the social fantasy of society (the authors) encounters limitations in identifying a model of happiness, prompting an exploration of religious and/or spiritual dimensions. The situations of happiness are more of a pursuit than a reason. Ultimately, this study contributes to contemporary literary criticism related to happiness and social context. The social structuration lies at the state level, where the dominance of ideological frameworks overlooks the fulfilments of (social) justice, humanity, unity, and even divinity.

Keywords: characterization; happiness; social fantasy; social structure.

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INTRODUCTION

Most Indonesian novels do not place happiness as the central axis of storytelling. Instead, they often introduce subtle gaps that undermine or negate happiness. Although the search for happiness is one of the essential things in human life (Aristotle, 2000, pp. 10–13), literary works that narrate suffering are more often considered to have an enduring theme (Bücheler-Scott, 2018). As a form of fiction that replicates social life, literature can function as a medium through which the meaning of suffering in real life is revealed and explored (Koester, 2017, p. 22). In doing so, literary narrative and representations show paradoxical and ambiguous vision of human happiness (Martins, 2024). The more a story explores human suffering, the more interesting it comes. Therefore, it is hard to find representations of happiness in canonical novels.

The canonical Indonesian novels feature dominant themes of colonialism, social conflict, identity crises, and humanity rather than the story of happiness. For example, Ahmad Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (1982) and *Kubah* (1995); Kuntowijoyo's *Mantra Pejinak Ular* (2000), *Pasar* (2016), and *Wasripin dan Satinah* (2003); Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi* (1992) and *Jalan Menikung* (2000) prove that happiness is hard to be the central pivot of storytelling. Those novels show that there are no happy characters. Srintil and Rasus in the *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* trilogy are stories of sadness, poverty, and suffering. Abu Kasan Sapari in *Mantra Pejinak Ular* is a man who seeks authenticity and chooses to be a puppet master in his old age. Lantip in *Para Priyayi* is a good and clever man who may find happiness at the end of the story because he is lucky to have a good wife (Kayam, 1992, p. 308). However, those remains novels that are not centered on happiness because pleasurable story only put as a dream. Even as in *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat* (Blessing in Disguise), one has to be miserable to get pleasure (happiness) (Sati, 1991, p. 192).

This study explains the absence of happiness sociologically and why it is challenging to incorporate as narrative expression. The circumstances are related to the situation and condition of the environment, particularly the social structure in which the novel's characters live. This research sees that social situations and conditions either facilitate or hinder an individual's attainment of happiness. Most people regard happiness as a goal rather than something to be actively pursued. In this case, this research analyses whether happiness is effectively integrated or positioned within the storytelling process rather than being treated as a goal or outcome in the narrative. The question lies on two aspects: First, is there a relationship between the social position of the characters and the problems that

prevent them from enjoying happiness? Second, do the characters in the story relate to an individual's chances of achieving happiness?

A happiness in literary works is often oriented toward “purpose”, not the way people live. Several studies proves that literary authors tend to put their characters in difficult situations in order to build an interesting story. For example, Jayanti (2022) explored how characters in a literary work struggled to achieve happiness through numerous stages. In another aspect, the meaning of happiness is more essential to achieve (Angesty, 2024). According to Zhoafir (2024), the concept of happiness is more effective with religion. The studies above lead to a gap in Indonesian literary criticism concerning happiness. Previous research ignored a criticism of happiness as a “storyline”. Therefore, this study examines how the formula of “happiness” is hard to be the main theme of a story. With a comprehensive result of theoretical considerations and literary analysis, this article contributes theoretically beyond existing sociological or philosophical readings of Indonesian literature based on an analysis of happiness in relation with social fantasy. The relation between both aspects enriches a new perspective on the role of happiness in the narrative and social life of humans.

The study of happiness has been conducted extensively, especially in psychology, religion, and philosophy. Fundamentally, psychology sees happiness and well-being refer to someone who is experiencing comfort, joy, and positive states such as flow or absorption (Carr, 2004, p. 1). The one who engage in regular physical activity, adequate sleep patterns, and striving for worthwhile goals will be easier to experience happiness (Carr, 2004, p. 7). See also Martin in “Happiness and Virtue in Positive Psychology” (Martin, 2007, pp. 89–103).

Religion, as the study of belief, plays a significant role in the perspective of happiness. Research suggests that people who engage in religious worship or rituals experience immense happiness (Childs, 2010, p. 550). However, whether religion can satisfy people's happiness is a complex issue because there are still so many possibilities that may influence human satisfaction. Among these factors are the social circumstances and conditions in which individuals live. Therefore, Sufism—as a discipline that studies effort to purify the self (Solihin & Anwar, 2008, p. 16)—also explores the concept of happiness. A study utilizing Modern Sufism by Hamka as the material object suggests that, according to Sufism, true happiness is achieved when an individual becomes close to God (Ihsan & Alfiansyah, 2021, p. 280).

In philosophy, Socrates formulated the concept of *eudaimonia* in the previous centuries. *Eudaimonia* was the centre of happiness theory for subsequent philosophers.

According to Socrates, people can achieve happiness by virtue (*Arate*). To understand *Arate*, humans must traverse the path of knowledge (*Episteme*) (Fetrat, 2020, p. 24). Knowledge, wisdom/policy, and happiness are threshold achievements—something that can be improved. In this case, accurate knowledge followed by proper behaviour is the key to happiness. *Eudaimonia* also translates as “flourishing” or “well-being” and is often equated with living wisely (Dhiman, 2021, p. 3). In contemporary context, Seligman (2002) argues that authentic happiness comes from identifying and cultivating the most fundamental strengths and using them every day in daily activity. This discussion leads to a perspective of positive psychology that provide three pillars including positive emotion, positive traits, and positive institution.

Contemporary theories answer why happiness is challenging to attain. It is because happiness is more of a social and ideological construction. In this context, Žižek calls it as an ideological fantasy (Žižek, 2008, p. 27). A fantasy that “teaches us how to desire” (Žižek, 2006, p. 40). The primary thing about social construction is that human thoughts, attitudes, and actions inherently carry ideological content for a long time from social life. That is why the desire for an ideal life, including the pursuit of happiness, remains a social fantasy. As a social imagination, human always tries to get the fantasy yet invariably remain uncertain as to whether they have truly achieved happiness or not.

Previous perspectives, originating from philosophy, psychology, Sufism, and sociology, assist in building a comprehensive definition of happiness. When the concept of happiness is identified, this research can fill the gap on how happiness was avoided to fulfill the storyline. This research is conducted to prove that the definitions are debatable because there is no central definition of happiness. Moreover, the existence of social fantasy through Žižek explains how the narration in literary works is controlled by people or authors. Hence, the textual analysis sees characters versus the social condition and environment in the literary setting.

METHOD

This study explains the theoretical concepts of happiness with a qualitative approach. The type of this research lies in both literary and textual analysis. It identifies literary elements from novels such as characters, plot, and setting. Also, the elements then compared to philosophical thinking of happiness. A qualitative study utilizes words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs as the data for research. The data are chosen based on the relevance of the

context of happiness, which is then classified based on the research variables. Hence, the data collection was carried out by determining, reading, and understanding the narrative unit of the material object. Samples will be purposively selected from Indonesian novels. Six works are used as the object of research: *Sitti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli, *Salah Asuhan* by Abdoel Moeis, *Belenggu* by Armijn Pane, *Wasripin dan Satinah* by Kuntowijoyo, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* by Ahmad Tohari, and *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, which are considered appropriate in representing a mode of storytelling that infrequently positions happiness as its central theme. The position of happiness in those novels is more a pursuit than a way of life, because the characters often face physical and structural violence from the social condition. In conclusion, data analysis and conclusion drawing were conducted by comparing data groups from the six novels. The interpretation relies on the plots and characters that reveal the relation between characters and social structure conditions to identify the opportunity for happiness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Considerations: Can happiness be defined?

The fundamental consideration of happiness comes from a theoretical context. Many perspectives show that the concept of happiness varies for each individual. For example, Norton (2012) identifies this mechanism through the adventures of Robinson Crusoe. The main character, Robinson Crusoe, was a man who ignored his father's advice to stay at the "upper station of low life" or a simple life that he believed is the most suitable thing for human happiness. Crusoe defies his father because he assumed that happiness cannot be fulfilled if he only followed his father's orders. Crusoe eventually went sailing and was stranded on an island, which gave him valuable experiences. Crusoe's story proves that everyone has different happiness and cannot be determined by others. In Crusoe's case, parents cannot dictate their children's happiness, as what they perceive to be good may not necessarily lead to their happiness.

A happy life is closely associated with four virtues: wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage. The perspective then becomes the fundamental opinion that moral wisdom and virtuous conduct serve as the pathways to happiness. However, life often does not achieve positive happiness (Smith, 2021, p. 157). In Socrates' moral theory, happiness is the desire of all human beings and the ultimate goal of all rational actions. It is based on the principle of *eudaimonism*, which became axiomatic for all subsequent moralists of classical times (Vlastos, 1984, p. 183). Philosophers in Indonesia, for example, Ki Ageng Suryomentaram, in

his traditional beliefs, say that to obtain happiness, humans must understand their own and other's feelings (Sumanto, 2011, p. 29), surrender, *eling* (remember), and merge (fuse) with God.

There are three positions of eudaimonism after Socrates (Vlastos, 1984, pp. 183–186). First, Aristippus—was one of the close companions of Socrates and Epicurus—identified happiness with pleasure and the absence of pain. Second, it comes from Aristotle and Plato. Aristotle said that happiness is always preferred for its own sake and not for anything else. Honour, pleasure, and cleverness are in the best interests of happiness. However, Plato does not mention that not all goods or things are desired on behalf of pleasure. Third, the position that virtue is the only element of happiness.

Pleasure and the absence of pain as the definition of happiness are still open for negotiation. Feldman discusses this part related to the sensory hedonism about happiness. He argues that a person can be happy even when he feels pain. For example, a mother who just gave birth to her baby is feeling more sensory pain than sensory pleasure, but it was the happiest moment of her life. Conversely, an individual may experience unhappiness when exposed to heightened sensory pleasure (Feldman, 2010, p. 107). However, Gilbert argues that there is no straightforward formula for achieving happiness (Gilbert, 2007, p. 263). Other discussions argue that happiness is invisible. It is shown by particular symptoms of human life, such as from the various expressions that can be seen and witnessed. Happiness is something that every human being seeks in life, both for individuals and groups. However, for some people, happiness has its definition. Happiness is determined more by one's state of mind than by external circumstances (Lama & Culter, 1998).

Social conditions and situations are sociological instruments to see the opportunity for happiness. Happiness is conditional and contextual. The individual may wonder what it would be like to possess something, visit some place, or engage in certain activities, as well as how to address specific challenges. At this stage, if the individual cannot move with certainty into the future, one will begin to understand what has made them stumble (Gilbert, 2007, p. 263). Therefore, sometimes, humans feel disappointed and unhappy if the conditions do not meet their expectations.

The questions of happiness have a strong relation with social conditions (including economic and political conditions) that influence individual's (citizen, people, or characters) opportunity to be happy. These social conditions correlate with how the state and society manage their welfare. If the state and society are in a favourable condition, they are

economically or politically stable. It certainly opens up better opportunities for citizens to get a comfortable and happy position. The vice versa, if the state and society are in conflict and tension, it will reduce the chances of citizens to get happiness. Indeed, the issue of happiness is closely linked to an individual's character. However, even an individual with an ethical disposition may struggle to attain happiness if consistently plagued by various problems.

Characters and Social Structure Conditions

The storytelling material in a novel places happiness as something that can be postponed or cancelled. Literary works as stories that can reflect people's social lives provide insight into the pursuit of happiness. Novelists or writers can explain the pursuit of happiness in their stories better than a happiness researcher (Amato, 2018). In their stories, novelists can present approaches, alternatives, and corrections to understand the free and diverse pursuit of happiness. Reflectively, the stories dramatize the pursuit of happiness. However, happiness is still pursued, sought, and hunted because it is not present. Characters in fictional stories, for example, face challenges and obstacles to achieve their desire to be happy. In this case, Mark Manson argues that happiness comes from being able to solve problems. True happiness will be realized if someone finds a problem and enjoys solving it (Manson, 2018, p. 37). The problem is not always significant, but consider, for instance, the daily activities that relate to human nature. Such as hunger, we will be happy when we are full.

In this perspective, it is necessary to examine whether an individual's social position (the subject of the study) facilitates or hinders the opportunity for happiness. For example, Nurbaya and Samsulbahri in *Sitti Nurbaya* (SN) belong to the middle class. The story showed that both people were well-educated, went to school by vehicle, and dressed appropriately (Rusli, 1992, pp. 9–12). At that time, with these conditions, Nurbaya and Samsulbahri could represent affluent people and were not from the lower class. The story in *Sitti Nurbaya* did not show the problems of Nurbaya and Samsulbahri in the first plot. When Nurbaya had not yet faced the issue of traditions, family economics, and politics in Dutch colonialism, Nurbaya and Samsulbahri still had time to enjoy the joys of adolescence before adulthood. However, it seems that Nurbaya and Samsulbahri did not get to enjoy the courtship period, which is usually described as the happiest period.

However, when Nurbaya learned of the family's economic problems (her parents' business was going bankrupt) and to overcome the bankruptcy, Nurbaya married off to

Datuk Maringgih. Nurbaya and Samsulbahri were upset and worried. Moreover, it is also told in SN that society was dealing with the strict rules of the Dutch East Indies government regarding taxes, internal problems of economic jealousy, and social status, causing society to experience multiple tensions. These things caused the community, especially the characters in the novel, to have no time to enjoy a comfortable life. The overall situation is tension and anxiety, with little connection to a narrative centred on happiness.

The character's problem in *Sitti Nurbaya* is also found in *Salah Asuhan*. Hanafi, Corrie, Rapih, and Mariam (Hanafi's mother) are characters in a story of prolonged inner conflict. The oppressive political condition of the Dutch East Indies government causes the characters to live in discomfort in a racist social situation. Problems arise and subside, presenting numerous obstacles for the characters. Hanafi and Corrie, as educated people, theoretically have a greater chance of dealing with their life problems. They are also not living in economic distress. However, racism, jealousy, and different lifestyles cause them to be embroiled in a conflict that is hard to resolve. The sadness of life caused them to get sick and die. There is no evidence that these characters had experienced a happy life.

Sukartono (Kartono/Tono) and Sumartini (Tini), as educated people in *Belenggu*, also experienced life insecurities that were not distinguishable from the novels discussed earlier. The progress of the times and the changes in Tini's lifestyle did not match Kartono's expectations. Kartono desired a woman (wife) conventionally constructed by Javanese culture. It caused uncomfortable circumstances for married couples like Kartono and Tini. Conversely, Tini also did not imagine that her husband Kartono, a doctor, would desire a woman who was not like Tini, who was relatively advanced in the era. At this point, it shows that the social fantasies are different in terms of happiness in society. Such differences are unpredictable because the problems of an individual's life, or even a society, are relatively distinguishable. It depends on the forms of an individual's relationships in society and the character of each person. The point is that neither the state, society, nor various relationships can produce happiness, even though religion, psychology, or philosophy explain what happiness is.

In contrast with previous novel, Srintil and Rasus in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (RDP) are uneducated individuals who spent their childhood in a poor, conflict-ridden village where there was no access to education, leading Srintil and Rasus live in ignorance and poverty. Various myths or traditions shackle them and their community. It means that instead of living a happy life, they have no imagination or knowledge of happiness. As they grew up,

they encountered increasingly complex challenges. Srintil was imprisoned and eventually descended into madness. Rasus had a better life because he became a low-ranking soldier. However, the less knowledgeable Rasus became, the more significant his anxiety grew.

Other characters, such as Wasripin and Satinah in *Wasripin dan Satinah* have difficulty finding happiness. Wasripin, who only attended primary school, is stranded in the capital city and lives as a poor individual in the true sense of the word. He depended on her foster mother, who struggled to find food daily. A teenage Wasripin used to be a gigolo for free for some women in his neighbourhood. Even though he had good food, Wasripin was always bothered that his life had gone wrong. After some time, Wasripin moved from his poor neighbourhood in the capital to a village. In his new place, Wasripin's behaviour was considered strange by the villagers. He was mistaken for a shaman. It was in his profession as a shaman that Wasripin met Satinah. Wasripin underwent extraordinary psychological and inner development. Thus, he is known as a holy person. In that position, Wasripin had the opportunity to gain happiness. However, Wasripin was heading toward an empty man (*suwung*), so the parameters of a happy person could no longer adjust him. However, the novel does not depict that Wasripin had the chance to experience pleasure.

As a commoner confronted with numerous challenges in her life, Satinah was molested by her uncle. The incident changed her life. After meeting Wasripin, she fell in love with him. However, there is no information about them enjoying their time in love because they lived separately and rarely met. Although the story ends that they were going to have a wedding, the marriage is cancelled when Wasripin suddenly disappears without any news. We can imagine how Satinah's life was painful, especially when she lost her love.

The narrative of Minke and Annelies in *Bumi Manusia* exemplifies a story of sadness (as one of the opposites of happiness). They were economically well-off. East Indies, during the reign of the Dutch, applied racism, as well as brutal political and economic pressure from the government. According to Mbembe's terms (Mbembe, 2019, p. 92), Minke and Annelies were like "living dead". They were living under various threats: the pressure of traditions that contradict Minke's modern spirit, the intimidating remark of his love for Annelies by racist politics, and growing control of the economy by the government. This condition causes Minke to struggle with inferiority constantly and believe in forced characteristics. Annelies, in a different social position, was also under pressure and the tug of war between various interests. Annelies is unable to lead a typical life as a woman. The tug of war between her indigenous descent (as the daughter of a *Nyai*) and her Dutch male parents Herman Mellema (Toer, 1980, p. 79), causes her to live in opposing "ideological traditions". Overall, the novel

explores the theme of love that is thwarted or obstructed, different ideological interests, and thus life defined by tension and anger.

Six novels reflect characters with different social situations and conditions. On the one hand, characters are economically safe with some capital modal. There are also characters with a good intellectual portion. On the other hand, some novels reflect the characters who live with poverty and ignorance. Nevertheless, their social status and condition do not guarantee satisfaction or happiness. Their life depend on how the political power causes conflict and leads to social and structural violence.

Various explanations above show that social position and an individual's state of knowledge are associated directly or indirectly. In the story, this happens when the character deals with the social environment. Therefore, the political and economic conditions of the state in managing society play a significant role in whether the citizens will have a good chance of happiness. The novels generally tell the reader that the state and society are not in good condition. This condition is also a fertile ground for authors (writers) to expose life, including the limited chance of citizens (especially the characters) who barely have the opportunity to be happy).

Characterization and Happiness Opportunities

There are four possibilities of how characters deal with other people and their environment. Firstly, good characters face a good environment. Second, good characters face people and environments that are not conducive. Third, an evil character faces a good living/social environment. Fourth, an evil character faces an environment that is not conducive/not good. Good and conducive means a potential character and social environment that provides comfort, productivity, and a mutual support atmosphere for goodness so that the people involved are expected to get opportunities for happiness. However, the definition of good is relative. It will be different from many point of views. In general criteria, "good" means all positive things that support the common virtue.

The representation of characterization dynamic reflected in *Sitti Nurbaya*. The protagonist, Sitti Nurbaya was kind, compassionate, soft-spoken, lives her religious beliefs, and an educated woman. However, Sitti Nurbaya was confronted with a cultural and political situation that was not conducive to Nurbaya as a good individual. Moreover, Datuk Maringgih utilized cultural norms and political conditions for his gain. By the end of the story, we find that Nurbaya never seems to get her happiness. In fact, until her death, Nurbaya also did not get her true love with Samsulbahri.

Other character such as Samsulbahri faced the same experience. In the beginning, there were no signs that Samsulbahri was a bad or untrustworthy person. Samsulbahri was also an educated man. However, this situation did not relate to his chances of happiness. Samsulbahri and Nurbaya faced a forbidden love, Samsulbahri's position against Minangkabau traditions, and Maringgih taking Nurbaya with him led to Samsulbahri's resentment towards Maringgih. Because of this grudge, he joined the *Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger* (KNIL)—the military unit of the Dutch East Indies colonial government—which later had to deal with the Indonesian army, including Datuk Maringgih. Therefore, social, economic, political, and even psychological preoccupations meant that a good man like Samsulbahri was deprived of the opportunity to reap the rewards of his kindness. Subsequently, he was considered a traitor because when there was a war in his community, Samsulbahri was on the Dutch side.

In other cases, the characters of Hanafi and Corrie in *Salah Asuhan* also experienced the same problem. In the beginning, Hanafi and Corrie were represented as bad characters, an impression of arrogance because they feel educated on Hanafi's behalf, and a sense of a higher race because of their Western descent on Corrie's side, known as Indo women. Corrie did not change her character until the end of the story. It made her difficult to find happiness. Meanwhile, Hanafi was told to repent of the various mistakes he has made. However, Hanafi's repentance was relatively late because it was shown at the end of his death (Moeis, 1928, p. 241).

Srintil in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* contrasts with Corrie. The author represents Srintil as having uncertain moral standing and whether she is a good or evil character. Srintil has no formal education, follows her local beliefs, and speaks her mind. The identification of her actions and thoughts proves there was no bad intention. Srintil lives her life according to social demands and cultural norms. In her ignorance and limited information, Srintil decided to give up her virginity to Rasus and not to be traded in the *Bukak Klambu* ritual (Tohari, 2003, p. 51). Srintil's decision could not be considered bad behaviour in the context of her culture and beliefs. However, the clash between cultural norms and the call of her conscience made Srintil experience prolonged discomfort. Srintil's participation as a *ronggeng* (dancer) in a night market event organized by the communist party caused problems. For some considerations, Srintil had to deal with the authorities and even went to prison. Srintil was tortured physically and mentally in prison. After being released from jail, Srintil experienced severe trauma, mental disorders, and memory loss. From the story, we know that Srintil did not experience what is called happiness throughout her life.

The novel also portrays Rasus as a simple man who has no evil thoughts and even tends to be innocent. Rasus was involved in the *Bukak Klambu* ritual as a child. Something that he did not know and did not enjoy as risky because of his limited knowledge. Good fortune led him to become a soldier and be involved in various activities in the army. However, Tohari in *RDP* does not intend to recount the success of a poor man who became a soldier. The essential thing about the novel is that education and knowledge are crucial so that a person can choose and decide his life more rationally to face various problems. However, like Kuntowijoyo, Tohari has a special mission that religious and spiritual matters are no less essential as the foundation of human life in overcoming worldly pressures.

In contrast, with Srintil and Rasus, Pane, in *Belenggu* narrates a couple named Kartono and Tini, middle-class people of their time, who live with different expectations. Kartono, as a doctor, wanted Tini to be a quiet, obedient “Javanese woman” who could serve her husband well. However, Kartono did not get that because Tini was an educated woman who wanted an equal and democratic life. The different psychological situations and expectations caused them to live in very uncomfortable conditions. In the novel, Kartono and Tini are not living in happy and comfortable circumstances. Kartono had stolen time to get happiness with Rohayah. Kartono saw that Rohayah had a personality that met his expectations (Pane, 1988, p. 64). However, Kartono could not find happiness because he blamed himself for betraying Tini.

According to the narrative, the novel does not portray religious characters. It shows that the characters did not overcome their life problems based on their belief. The condition of the country and society is safe and far from conflict. Hence, the prominent mission of the novel is not to address the political and economic conditions of the country. It is more of a storytelling point of view. The essential thing about the story is the change from the traditional to the modern world. Thereby, in the case of Tini and Kartono, the loss of happiness is more of a personal problem and then the state’s inability to manage the welfare of its people.

The tension between character versus social norms is reflected in Kuntowijoyo’s *Wasripin dan Satinah*. Wasripin is a character that tries to meet the norms. Although he was a gigolo, it did not mean that he was a person who lived without normative moral ethics. It was due to his inadequate neighbourhood, and Wasripin also never received lessons on what sin, merit, or lessons/knowledge contradict religious teachings. However, because Wasripin

was good-natured and had a conscience, he had a premonition and feeling that gigolo represented the goat's life. Then, Wasripin repented and changed his whole life.

Along the way, Wasripin became powerful and almost like a shaman. He could treat various illnesses by only relying on prayer (Kuntowijoyo, 2003, pp. 36–40). There were no evil thoughts or intentions in him. Wasripin's situation is highly regarded in several local beliefs, including Islam. It is also one of Kuntowijoyo's specialties in presenting magic characters in a local context, which also exists in his other novels, such as *Mantra Pejina Ular* (Kuntowijoyo, 2000, p. 202). Despite these conditions, Wasripin, who has become a "*dukun tiban*"—Javanese culture recognizes the existence of someone who at some point shows strange behaviour but is considered by certain people to have received a spiritual message (Prawihardjo, 1978, p. 125)—has a good chance of happiness. However, due to his preoccupation with many problems and his limited knowledge of happiness, it seems that Wasripin does not have time to enjoy happiness herself.

The reflection of characters in different social condition through six novel shows that the specific representation of happiness is a complex discussion, whether from someone high-class, educated, or religious. The economic capital does not guarantee to supports happiness because not all rich people are happy of their wealth. It shows that happiness cannot always be categorized and confirmed in one aspect. Everything that can be defined as happiness can be deconstructed because it cannot always be determined. Each individual has differences in terms of being happy. The standpoint of happiness from the novel show how it is not easy to obtain. Although an individual may already have virtues, knowledge, and proper behaviour, it does not necessarily mean they are positively happy.

The six novels discussed prove that the characters are suffering subjects. Indeed, in some parts of the story, they attempt to gain happiness. However, the path they take is the path of suffering. The line becomes the story material in fiction, which makes it interesting. The position and social environment in fiction also demonstrate how humans face the waves of suffering toward happiness. However, the suffering judged by the social environment does not necessarily meet the individual's perspective. Humans seem to suffer even though they are at the peak of their true happiness. We can reflect this through happiness and determination in an individual's mind. However, this judgment of each self seems challenging and a mystery to discover.

The relationship between fictional characters and real-life people with their social environment also reveals dualism. On the one hand, their position in their social environment can determine the criteria for happiness. On the other hand, referring to their

innermost feelings, happiness does not conform to the social environment. Therefore, is happiness related to the personality of the character? Unfortunately, this is not the case; individuals may possess good or less desirable characteristics, be knowledgeable or uninformed, and be situated within supportive social environments, which do not necessarily lead to happiness or have happiness as a way of life or telling stories.

The dynamics of happiness make it very challenging to be the story's main point. If the plot uses a happy story from the beginning to the ending, the story becomes monotonous. Although some parts show the characters have the opportunity to have satisfaction, the author chooses them as an example that their status and character do not guarantee happiness. It also shows that the authors cultivate the reader's imagination through the story. This shift increases the possibility that happiness is viewed as an objective to be pursued rather than as a consequence. Hence, happiness becomes ineffective when it is incorporated into the narrative process.

CONCLUSION

There are two prominent points based on the situations and opportunities for happiness from the characters in several Indonesian novels. Firstly, the character's position and social fantasy determine the manners and opportunities for satisfaction. A person in a better (higher) social position should have a greater chance of gaining happiness because they can use the capital modal to solve the problem. Nevertheless, a higher social status may also subject an individual to challenges, potentially creating a conflict between the pursuit of happiness and the resolution of these issues.

In contrast, someone in a lower social position should have a greater chance to be happy. It correlates with the complexity of the challenges encountered by individuals in lower social positions that are not as intricate as those in higher social positions. A limitation of individuals in lower social positions is their reduced social capital when addressing the challenges, which diminishes their potential for happiness. However, an individual's social standing and background do not solely determine happiness. Both individuals in high and low social positions are susceptible to experiencing unhappiness. Secondly, the position of people in the social structure and environment can build their characters. It is related to the educational environment (family, school, and community conditions). The more conducive an individual's structure and environment are, the greater their opportunities to attain happiness. In the novel, the characters are shaped and faced with various social problems

according to their respective social positions, so they do not seem to have time to enjoy happiness. Ultimately, this research contributes to the study of Indonesian literary narrative regarding the role of happiness in a storyline. Novels need problems as material, so it would be very challenging for the writer to tell a story about happiness for the whole narrative. Hence, it is essential for further research to examine how happiness plays a significant role in character building and development in literary narrative.

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