

WOMEN, HAPPINESS, AND EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF INDONESIAN FAMILY LIFE SURVEY (IFLS) DATA

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ABSTRACT

Happiness has been proven vital and is desired by everyone, including adult women. Adult women have both domestic and public roles, making them vulnerable to depression or other mental disorders. There are many sources and components that can increase the happiness of adult women, one of which is the level of education. This study aims to provide an overview of the happiness of adult women in terms of their level of education, presenting a valid source of data to improve the happiness of Indonesian women. This study used secondary data from the Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS), with 6842 women aged 25-40 years as research subjects, and conducted regression analysis. The results showed that education level is significant in influencing the happiness level of Indonesian women ($R^2 = 0.012$, $F(1,6842) = 82.16$, $p < 0.001$). The higher the education level of Indonesian women, the happier they would be. This study also examined age, marital status, and place of residence (rural or urban) for women's happiness.

Keywords: *education level, happiness, ifls, and women.*

ABSTRAK

Kebahagiaan menjadi hal yang penting dan ingin dicapai semua orang, termasuk perempuan dewasa. Perempuan dewasa dengan berbagai perannya baik domestik maupun publik menjadikan dirinya rentan pada kondisi yang mengarah pada kecenderungan depresi atau gangguan mental lain. Terdapat berbagai sumber dan komponen yang mampu meningkatkan kebahagiaan perempuan dewasa, termasuk tingkat pendidikannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan gambaran kebahagiaan perempuan dewasa ditinjau dari tingkat pendidikannya, sehingga nantinya terdapat sumber data yang valid untuk meningkatkan kebahagiaan perempuan Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan data sekunder dari Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS), dengan subyek penelitian 6842 perempuan berusia 25-40 tahun. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis regresi. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa tingkat pendidikan signifikan dalam mempengaruhi tingkat kebahagiaan perempuan Indonesia ($R^2 = 0.012$, $F(1,6842) = 82.16$, $p < 0.001$). Semakin tinggi tingkat pendidikan yang telah dicapai sebelumnya oleh perempuan Indonesia menjadikan perempuan usia 25-40 tahun semakin mereka merasa bahagia. Penelitian ini juga menguji usia, status perkawinan, dan tempat tinggal (desa atau kota) untuk melihat kebahagiaan perempuan.

Kata Kunci : *ifls, kebahagiaan, perempuan, dan tingkat pendidikan.*

INTRODUCTION

Emotions are so much a part of human life, that they are recognized as a driving factor for life choices and strong decision-making (Lerner et al., 2015). One of the positive emotions

that most people aim for in life is happiness. Happiness is one of the positive emotions that can manage and change behavior in humans (Shiota et al., 2017).

Conversely, disruptions in happiness are a contributing factor to disease risk (Steptoe, 2019). There are mechanisms that potentially link happiness to health, such as physical activity and food choices, as well as metabolic processes in the body (Steptoe, 2019). Another study found that unhappiness is linked to poor lifestyle choices and leads to poor health, which can increase mortality (B. Liu et al., 2016). In addition, income levels which are influenced by the quality of education also have an impact on happiness, with low income combined with weak education substantially affecting an individual's subjective well-being (Araki, 2022).

Research into factors associated with happiness is of increasing interest. Happiness is used as an umbrella term for theories of well-being, which are intrinsic experiences related to a sense of worth, usefulness, and positive beliefs about self and environment (Kaczmarek, 2020). Happiness depends on many factors, including genes, gender, age, education, household income, socioeconomic status, physical health, relationship quality, marital status, religiosity, negative life history, and self-esteem (Chen et al., 2013). The results of the study, which identified several socio-demographic factors, showed that men are happier than women (Rizzato et al., 2023). Domains showing higher happiness in men related to financial status (Rizzato et al., 2023).

Gender differences have different outcomes with regard to levels of happiness as seen from men and women expressing themselves in the environment (Salavera & Usán, 2021). Basically, women have an easy perception of being happy, and it appears that just being a woman can significantly increase happiness (Montgomery, 2022). However, despite the positive coefficient, the proportion remains small because women's life satisfaction is on average lower than men's when it comes to factors such as income, health, and education (Montgomery, 2022). Differences in the happiness levels of men and women also start from childhood experiences. For example, families that allocate more family resources to sons than daughters as they grow up are more likely to see adult males attain higher socioeconomic status and have higher happiness in the future (Y. Liu et al., 2023).

Gender inequality, especially in education, seems to occur, which has an impact on happiness, especially for women. In fact, education is used as one of the foundations for women to have equal opportunities in social status, economy, employment, income, to be able to gain happiness (Y. Liu et al., 2023; Montgomery, 2022). Education is one of the basic needs for the achievement of happiness in rural women, according to the results of research conducted on rural women in India and the Philippines (Biana & Jabar, 2024). In Islam, however, both men

and women have equal rights and obligations to worship and achieve the highest level of knowledge (Abidin, 2017).

Specifically in Indonesia, the opportunity and encouragement given to the women to pursue higher education have become a means of self-actualization (Umroh, 2018). Unfortunately, the condition of women's education in Indonesia is still low compared to men and efforts are therefore needed to encourage women to pursue higher education. The number of Indonesian residents aged 10 years and above who are not or have never been to school according to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2023 reach 1.15% for male urban residents and 2.23% for rural residents. The number of female residents aged 10 years and above who are not in school is much higher than men, namely 3.44% or around 8.4 million urban residents and 5.84% or around 22.1 million rural residents in 2023 (BPS, 2023). The percentage of women not in school at age 10 and above is twice the percentage of men who are not in school.

While BPS (2023) data indicates progress in gender parity for school attendance, Psacharopoulos & Patrinos (2018) demonstrate that even small disparities disproportionately reduce women's lifetime earnings and well-being. Equitable access to schooling is not only a moral imperative but also an economic lever for happiness. Prioritizing girls' education aligns with evidence that education reduces inequality and fosters societal well-being, particularly in low-income contexts.

The fact that Indonesia's awareness regarding equal share of education is, however, astounding. Not only in the education sector, female representation in Parliament, electoral, judicial and social policy areas has also been recognized. In fact, Indonesia's political development has guaranteed much freedom to women since its initial political reforms in 1998 (Afrianty, 2020). Countless women recently are also taking the lead in many governmental and private sectors, proving that gender discrimination, though still exists in some divisions (Larasati, 2021), is not gradually diminishing. One of the definite factors making these women so influential and recognizable is their well extended and comprehensive knowledge gained through education.

Improving women's education is pursued as a widespread policy in some countries. Research results in Egypt show that encouraging women to obtain higher levels of education even up to university can have an impact on reducing early marriage, being more socially empowered, and contributing to a better labor market (Elsayed & Shirshikova, 2023). The results of previous studies suggest that women who have higher education make women when facing the COVID-19 pandemic more empowered, have sufficient income, have less anxiety, do not

face violence, and have higher decisions, thus making women have a higher chance of being happy (Haq et al., 2020).

Research on women's happiness in developing countries is much desired, in relation to health, education and safety issues. The systematic review by Singh et al. (2023) compiled 155 studies from over 100 countries. The authors noted that most global studies have not explicitly examined the interaction between happiness and differences in educational status based on gender, particularly within local contexts such as Indonesia. Their study categorized the determinants of happiness into three broad domains—Health, Hope, and Harmony—but did not explore how education and gender interact to shape variations in happiness across different societal groups. The results of previous research related to happiness in women in Indonesia, focus more on women who work (Nursyiana & Badriyah, 2022). Other studies have positioned women's education as an additional variable (Y. Liu et al., 2023; Montgomery, 2022; Salavera & Usán, 2021).

Nevertheless, research that places education as the focus associated with happiness especially for Indonesian women needs further and more comprehensive investigation. It is attention grabbing since the robustness of accessible education to women is flourishing; women today are no longer prohibited from pursuing higher study. In fact, examination over this issue has been found finite. This study thus uses data from a large national survey that represents 83% of Indonesia's population (Strauss et al., 2016). The results of this study therefore are expected to be a valid reference to prove the relationship between women's education level and the happiness of Indonesian women.

METHODS

This study uses secondary data obtained from the Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS) data. The longitudinal survey started in 1993 until the fifth wave in 2015. This survey is conducted by Research and Development (RAND) which has worked with many credible institutions in Indonesia, including Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) (Strauss et al., 2016). IFLS participants are spread across 22 provinces and pay attention to sampling techniques, namely using the stratified random sampling method, with data collection conducted in face-to-face interviews by the IFLS interviewer team (Strauss et al., 2016).

In this study, participants were selected based on the criteria of being female, aged 25-40 years old, and completing a happiness questionnaire in 2015. We used pidlink (person identifier in IFLS) to collect information related to education level and the results of filling out the

happiness questionnaire. The happiness measure used a single item, asking participants: “Considering the current situation, do you feel that you are very happy, happy, unhappy, or very unhappy?” This question has also been used as a self-report in large-scale surveys of general populations around the world (Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Veenhoven, 2008). The happiness instrument contract using one item can be applied universally across cultures (Raudenská, 2023). The single happiness item showed good concurrent validity, high reliability, and was positively correlated with hope, optimism, self-affect and self-esteem (Kalmijn & Arends, 2010). Thus, it is concluded that the measurement of happiness with one item is valid and reliable (Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Kalmijn & Arends, 2010; Raudenská, 2023).

After some data merging and appropriate sorting of IFLS data, 6842 participants were selected. However, the areas of origin of 112 participants were not detected (Table 1). The researchers also collected information on participants' age, marital status, and place of residence for additional analysis in relation to Indonesian women's happiness.

Table 1. Distribution of the participants based on their residential location in 2014

Province	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sumatera Utara	502	7,5	7,5
Sumatera Barat	329	4,9	12,3
Riau	67	1,0	13,3
Jambi	8	0,1	13,5
Sumatera Selatan	330	4,9	18,4
Lampung	308	4,6	22,9
Bangka Belitung	50	0,7	23,7
Kepulauan Riau	18	0,3	24,0
DKI Jakarta	408	6,1	30,0
Jawa Barat	892	13,3	43,3
Jawa Tengah	849	12,6	55,9
D.I. Yogyakarta	286	4,2	60,1
Jawa Timur	830	12,3	72,5
Banten	299	4,4	76,9
Bali	318	4,7	81,6
Nusa Tenggara Barat	527	7,8	89,5
Kalimantan Barat	1	0,0	89,5
Kalimantan Tengah	13	0,2	89,7
Kalimantan Selatan	315	4,7	94,4
Kalimantan Timur	31	0,5	94,8
Sulawesi Selatan	339	5,0	99,9
Sulawesi Barat	10	0,1	100,0
Total	6730	100,0	

Missing System	112
Total	6842

Regression analysis was used for hypothesis testing in this study. Regression was used to examine the role and magnitude of the role of predictor variables on the criterion variable (Gravetter & Forzano, 2016). Furthermore, some additional predictors were included in the regression model. The additional predictors in this study were marital status and employment status. These two additional predictors have a multicategory nature, so multiple regression is carried out with a more specific test, namely multiple regression with dummy coded variables, multiple regression testing after variables are dummy coded or categorical dichotomy (Field, 2017). The value of a (constant) is set as the basic category for the mean of each variable that will be dummy processed. In the marital status variable (single/unmarried, divorced, separated, widowed) a categorical dichotomy is made into single vs. married, single vs. divorced, single vs. separated., and single vs. widowed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to descriptive data from 6842 women, 15% or 1029 felt very happy; 80.1% or 5480 felt happy, 4.2% or 287 felt unhappy, and 0.7% or 46 felt very unhappy. Regarding education level, there were 7.6% or 517 women who never went to school or did not graduate from primary school; 22.7% or 1553 who graduated from primary school; 22.2% or 1520 who graduated from junior high school; 32.8% or 2241 who graduated from senior high school; 5.1% or 347 who graduated from Diploma (D1, D2, or D3); 9.3% or 635 who graduated from S1; and 0.4% or 29 women who graduated from S2. Additional data related to marital status, there were 276 unmarried, 6315 married, 153 divorced, 55 divorced, and 43 separated. Judging from the data on place of residence, 3988 participants lived in cities and 2854 participants lived in villages. The age group 25-30 years was 2618 participants, the age group 31-35 years was 2411 participants, and the age group 36-40 years was 1813 participants (

Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the sampled individuals, 2014

Category	Subcategory	Percentage (%)	Number of Participants
Happiness Level	Very Happy	15%	1029
	Happy	80.1%	5480
	Unhappy	4.2%	287
	Very Unhappy	0.7%	46
Education Level	Never went to school / Did not graduate from primary	7.6%	517
	Graduated from Primary School	22.7%	1553
	Graduated from Junior High School	22.2%	1520
	Graduated from Senior High School	32.8%	2241
	Graduated from Diploma (D1, D2, D3)	5.1%	347
	Graduated from S1	9.3%	635
	Graduated from S2	0.4%	29
Category	Subcategory	Percentage (%)	Number of Participants
Marital Status	Unmarried	4%	276
	Married	92.3%	6315
	Divorced	2.2%	153
	Widowed	0.8%	55
	Separated	0.6%	43
Place of Residence	City	58.3%	3988
	Village	41.7%	2854
Age Group	25-30 years	38.3%	2618
	31-35 years	35.2%	2411
	36-40 years	26.5%	1813
	Total	100%	6842

The result of the hypothesis testing on 6842 Indonesian female participants in this study is to see the effect of women's education level on the happiness level of Indonesian women. The test results showed the value of $R^2 = 0.012$, $F(1,6842) = 82.16$, $p < 0.001$, so the predictor of education level proved to be significant in predicting the criterion variable, namely women's happiness. The higher a woman's education is directly proportional to her level of happiness. The R square (R^2) value of 0.012 indicates that the education level variable has a variation in effect of 1.2% on women's happiness. The effect variation appears small, indicating that there are many variables outside of education that affect women's happiness. However, the significance value cannot be ignored, especially the results of research with a large sample size and national scope.

The results of this study represent the state of happiness of Indonesian women, one of which is influenced by their educational accomplishment. This also provides evidence that the results of measuring Indonesian women's happiness are as significant as several other countries that put the level of educational attainment as a predictor (Elsayed & Shirshikova, 2023; Rizzato et al., 2023). Higher education may not have an effect on overall happiness, but higher educational attainment provides specific happiness through better self-development skills (Rizzato et al., 2023). Education, hence, serves as a tool to advance a person's life in many areas, making a woman resilient in facing everyday challenges.

Furthermore, successful educational achievement provides positive predictions throughout life, ranging from employment, better health and predicted longevity (Malanchini et al., 2020). Higher educational attainment makes a person capable of cognitive abilities, including problem solving (Ji et al., 2023). Research in 60 countries shows that educated women who are capable and have a large percentage of representation in the country's parliament will increase measures of women's happiness (Mookerjee & Beron, 2005).

Previous research indicates that women's education can also reduce violence, so women are better able to be happy (Haq et al., 2020). Violence against women is one of the factors that indicate low happiness in women, as they are vulnerable to depression and trauma (Anindya et al., 2020). Women who have been encouraged to increase their education contribute to lowering tolerance for violence through increased access to information, increased help-seeking, and increased income (Makate & Nyamuranga, 2024). The improved cognitive function, thanks to education, has greatly contributed to women's capability to resist intolerable attitudes toward them, such as abuse.

Additional analysis in this study revealed that age predicted women's happiness level ($R^2 = 0.014$, $F(2,6841) = 48.07$, $p < 0.001$). The degree of variation of the age predictor was higher than that of the education predictor. However, the results of this analysis showed that the older the participants, the more happiness decreased. Thus, younger Indonesian women are happier. A literature study mentioned that survey results from 145 countries showed that the age-happiness curve has a "U" shape (Blanchflower, 2021). More details from the research Blanchflower (2021), happiness decreases when a person enters adulthood and happiness will increase with an average age of 50 years and over. Thus, the results of research on the happiness of Indonesian women have similar results with 145 other countries; the level of Indonesian women's happiness aged 25-45 years is decreasing. In a more specific study looking at the happiness of working women with participants aged 15-45 years, the results found that young women had a greater chance of feeling

happy than older working women (Nursyiana & Badriyah, 2022). This suggests that younger women are more likely to be happy. Other research has shown that some women, as they get older, have less of a sense of work-life balance when their workload increases with household chores to complete (Lahamid et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the factor of residence in this study, whether rural or urban, had no differential effect on happiness. Place of residence did not predict women's happiness ($p = 0.205$). Happiness levels in urban areas have been described in many cities around the world to be higher than those in rural areas when explained by better economic conditions (Helliwell et al., 2020). However, some countries report that rural residents are happier than urban residents when it comes to a sense of belonging to a community (Helliwell et al., 2020). Similarly, if a healthy social environment is seen in villages as well as in cities, the result is that there is no significant difference between place of residence and happiness.

An additional analysis of the last variable is marital status. After going through data coding, the results of the analysis show that differences in marital status are not sufficient to predict women's happiness ($p = 0.659$). Marital status does not have a direct impact on women's happiness, but happiness is more about understanding marriage to the quality of relationships in marriage (Mangande et al., 2021).

These additional variables to education accomplishment, as a result, make a clear distinctive impact on women's happiness in Indonesia. Accessibility to education compared to these variables has provided an avenue to better living, thanks to the knowledge and rich experiences during the learning process.

Limitations

Concerning the extensive and intricate process in pursuing education, this study is not entirely covering all of the elements in detail, such as the system and regulations, and how they shape happy women. This study also does not examine the potential to the frailty of education in preventing mental issues, such as suicidal thoughts or any related depressive disorders. It is undeniably true that holistic approaches integrating education accomplishment with mental health support systems are indispensable in fostering environments where people grow and improve. Lastly, this study also does not discuss the specific reasons why certain individuals fall short of being happy regardless of the education they have achieved. We therefore suggest advance and careful examination on other components such as genetic, environmental, cultural, or experiential assessments.

CONCLUSION

The women's educational attainment is therefore undeniably relevant in predicting the measures of Indonesian women's happiness. The level of education indeed has an influence on women's opportunities for self-actualization, possibility of earning income and being more empowered in the social field, thus making women possessing a higher chance of being happy. Age, interestingly, has also an influence on happiness; the increase in age is followed by a decrease in the level of women's happiness. Meanwhile, marital status and place of residence do not make a difference to the happiness of Indonesian women. Unmarried, married, or divorced status is not able to predict or determine women's happiness. Likewise, the place where women live also cannot predict whether women are happier if they are in the village or in the city.

The well-being of society would also be impacted by the wellness of women. As mothering the homes and nurturing societies take much effort, the women indisputably need broader knowledge and experience, for they are known for this worthy role. Unhappiness that also means high stress levels would just forbid them to function well, that could be followed by dysfunctional homes, societies, and even nations. The results of this study thus encourage all parties to support women attaining education as far and as much as they could, without limit. The nations will benefit much from this, and improvement in many life sectors could be seen and enjoyed.

The results of this study thus encourage more equal distribution of education with a greater push allocated to Indonesian women, which in return will increase women's happiness. Yet, this study has several limitations related to the use of one wave of data from IFLS. It has not obtained a long-term picture of women's happiness and there are still many variables that need to be reviewed more broadly. These variables could serve as predictors to Indonesian women's happiness. So, further research needs to review other variables that may predict women's happiness.

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