THE CONSTRUCTION OF HAPPINESS AMONG RURAL JAVANESE MUSLIMS

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Abstract: Happiness is not a fixed entity but rather constructed by the individuals in their interaction with society. Happiness has been explored by religion, philosophy, and various academic disciplines, however, these concepts are constructed by the individuals following their respective contexts. Individuals' understanding of happiness varies due to their unique circumstances. Therefore, it becomes important to study the concept of happiness that exists in society. This study is a qualitative field study. The respondents consisted of twelve individuals who are graduates of Islamic schools (*madrasah*) or Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) who work as teachers, traders, or farmers in Kediri Regency, East Java, Indonesia. Data collection methods which have been used in this study are documentation and in-depth interviews. The findings of the study show that respondents generally perceive happiness as a state of peaceful and contented mind due to the fulfilment of physical and spiritual needs accompanied by gratitude to God. In line with their views, their orientation towards happiness is generally religious or spiritual. For them, genuine happiness can be achieved when they can perform religious rituals and become closer to God. To attain genuine happiness, their religious or spiritual needs and desires must be fulfilled. However, they also do not have the same orientation towards happiness. The religious doctrines of happiness acquired from the *madrasah* or the *pesantren* seem to be maintained, although there are slight differences among the respondents. This indicates that their understanding of happiness is a construct based on the doctrines they have learned and their individual experiences over time.

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Introduction

There are many perspectives on happiness, ranging from material and non-material viewpoints, hedonistic and eudaimonic approaches, spiritual and pragmatic aspects, as well as mundane and spiritual perspectives. Discussions about happiness have emerged since the Greek era. Modern Western and Eastern civilizations have difference perspectives on the notion of happiness. In Western civilization, happiness is perceived as a personal achievement, while in Eastern civilization, it is seen as the attainment of interpersonal relationships.[1] The Western concept of well-being is based on a hedonic perspective of happiness, which is in line with the cultural development of the West, which is heavily influenced by values of hedonism, individualism, and liberalism.[2] Western culture believes that individuals have the freedom to determine their happiness.[3] Studies on happiness often utilize subjective measures of happiness. However, in Eastern traditions, pleasure and positive emotions are considered transient and short-lived. Eastern worldview emphasizes self-control over desires, and thus, the concept of happiness in the

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[1] Ika Rusdiana, "Konsep Authentic Happiness pada Remaja dalam Perspektif Teori Myers," *Ibriez: Jurnal Kependidikan Dasar Islam Berbasis Sains* 2, no. 1 (June 20, 2017): 35–44, https://doi.org/10.21154/ibriez.v2i1.23.

[2] John Chambers Christopher and Sarah Hickinbottom, "Positive Psychology, Ethnocentrism, and the Disguised Ideology of Individualism," *Theory & Psychology* 18, no. 5 (October 1, 2008): 563–89, https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354308093396; Mohsen Joshanloo, "A Comparison of Western and Islamic Conceptions of Happiness," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 14, no. 6 (December 1, 2013): 1857–74, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-012-9406-7.

[3] Randy J. Larsen and M. Eid, *The Science of Subjective Well-Being*, ed. M. Eid and Randy J. Larsen (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 2.

East aligns with the concept of *eudaimonia*.[4] Furthermore, the concept of happiness in Islam is different from the perspective of hedonism. According to Islam, true happiness is not solely based on bodily desires but on human values concerning God, nature, and oneself. Happiness in Islam is inseparable from the function of humans as *khalīfah fī-l-arḍ* (vicegerent or steward on earth).

Rural Javanese Muslims predominantly acquired the concept of happiness from Islamic teachings. Still, they are living in an environment influenced by hedonic and pragmatic views that differ profoundly from the Islamic view of happiness. In this context, it is important to analyze their understanding of happiness, which is influenced by the realities of modern life.

Happiness is a state influenced by many factors. It cannot be seen as a standalone condition, disregarding other aspects. Several aspects that encompass an individual can influence their level of happiness, including social, cultural, economic, and political situations. Bronfenbrenner's ecological development model explains that individual development must be understood within the layers of contexts experienced throughout time.[5] Similarly, social relationships and the way one grows up in a family can also have an impact on the development of their happiness.[6] Happiness emerges in various contexts or circumstances and can arise from different stimuli. The manifestations of happiness are also diverse, such as feelings of calmness, joy, interest, curiosity, and others. Understanding happiness requires knowledge of the cultural diversity that exists.[7]

The study of happiness remains important because it is a dynamic and constructed concept. For Muslims whose conception of

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[4] Raj Maham and Omar Khalid Bhatti, "Impact of Taqwa (Islamic Piety) on Employee Happiness: A Study of Pakistan's Banking Sector," ed. Md. Mahmudul Alam, *Cogent Business & Management* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 1–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2019.1678554.

[5] Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Ecological Models of Human Development," in *International Encyclopedia of Education* (Oxford: Elsevier, 1994), https://www.ncj.nl/wp-content/uploads/media-import/docs/6a45c1a4-82ad-4f69-957e-1c76966678e2.pdf.

[6] Joshua Ray Tanzer, "Developing Authentic Happiness: Growth Curve Models to Assess Lifelong Happiness," *Journal of Positive Psychology* 00, no. 00 (2019): 1–9, https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1689419.

[7] Stephen Scoffham and Jonathan Barnes, "Happiness Matters: Towards a Pedagogy of Happiness and Well-Being," *Curriculum Journal* 22, no. 4 (2011): 535–48, https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2011.627214.

happiness is guided by Islamic teachings as taught by their teachers, differences in understanding may arise due to varying backgrounds and circumstances. Each of them can construct their happiness. Religious communities with different professional backgrounds or occupations may also differ in their construction of happiness. Therefore, it is important to ascertain whether there are shifts in their understanding of happiness from the conceptualization presented by their teachers. This study will examine the perspectives of Muslims in Kediri with diverse occupational backgrounds and their understanding of happiness.

In this research, the issue discussed is how Muslims from different occupational backgrounds perceive happiness. What are the differences and similarities in their conceptions of happiness? This qualitative research study was conducted in Kediri Regency, East Java. There were twelve respondents in total, consisting of *madrasah* or *pesantren* (Islamic education) alumni who worked as teachers, traders, or farmers, with each profession represented by four respondents. The respondents were from the Mojo, Plosoklaten, Gurah, and Kepung sub-districts of Kediri Regency. As this is qualitative research, the selection of respondents was not intended to represent the entire population, and the choice of sub-district locations also does not aim to represent other sub-districts. The data collection methods used were documentation and in-depth interviews.

The Notion of Happiness
1. *Eudaimonia* and *Hedonia* Happiness

Happiness is a term that refers to pleasurable satisfaction in well-being, security, or fulfilment of desires. It can be interpreted as the achievement of aspirations or success in attaining what is desired.[8] In the study of the philosophy of happiness, there are two approaches to happiness: *eudaimonia* and *hedonia*. These two approaches have significantly different emphases, one being more idealistic and the other more pragmatic. Both approaches have their origin in ancient philosophy. Greek philosophers like Aristotle established the concept

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[8] Sunedi Sarmadi, *Psikologi Positif* (Yogyakarta: Titah Surga, 2018), 24.

of *eudaimonia*, which means fulfilling one's role as a human being through activities in line with one's potential and guiding values.[9]

Delle Fave et al interpret eudaimonic happiness as a state of balance or harmony in family and social relationships.[10] The ability to maintain harmony with others will be more significant in the context of a plural society.[11] This harmony indicates a peaceful attitude while engaging in both pleasant and unpleasant activities, achieving balance in addressing diverse needs and life goals.[12] Meanwhile, *hedonia* is subjective pleasure.[13] Hedonism is the view that happiness comes from self-satisfaction and the avoidance of unpleasant or painful experiences.[14]

Studies of happiness from a hedonic perspective emphasize the analysis of positive emotions, self-satisfaction, comfort, enjoyment, and pleasure. They focus on an individual's satisfaction in fulfilling their desires.[15] This is different from studies that use an eudaimonic perspective that focuses on well-being. Studies on happiness aim to explore to what extent an individual fulfils their function as a human being. Happiness is felt by an individual when engaged in activities

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[9] Katie Robinson, Norelee Kennedy, and Dominic Harmon, "Happiness: A Review of Evidence Relevant to Occupational Science," *Journal of Occupational Science* 19, no. 2 (2012): 150–64, https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2011.634780.

[10] Antonella Delle Fave et al., "The Eudaimonic and Hedonic Components of Happiness: Qualitative and Quantitative Findings," *Social Indicators Research* 100, no. 2 (January 1, 2011): 185–207, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-010-9632-5.

[11] Dyah Tjaturrini, Chendy Arieshanty, Tri Asiati, Henggar Prasetyowati, and Zuyinatul Isro. "Calengsai and the Intimate Communications among Faith Believers," *IJoReSH: Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity* 1, no. 2 (2022). https://doi.org/10.18326/ijoresh.v1i2.215-240

[12] Gabriela Rodríguez-Hernández, "The Eudemonic and Hedonic Role of Happiness in a Population with High Levels of Life Satisfaction / El Rol Eudemónico y Hedónico de La Felicidad En Una Población Con Altos Niveles de Satisfacción Con La Vida," *Revista de Psicologia Social* 0, no. 0 (2019): 1–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/02134748.2019.1576323.

[13] Alan S. Waterman, "Reconsidering Happiness: A Eudaimonist's Perspective," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 3, no. 4 (October 1, 2008): 234–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760802303002.

[14] Robinson, Kennedy, and Harmon, "Happiness: A Review of Evidence Relevant to Occupational Science."

[15] Daniel Kahneman, "Objective Happiness," in *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, ed. Daniel Kahneman, E. Diener, and N. Schwarz (New York, NY, US: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999), 3–25.

that develop their potential.[16] These activities are characterized by balance, skills, and the development of interests and abilities.[17]

The American psychologist Martin E.P. Seligman (b. 1942) is one of the major contributors to the theory of authentic happiness today. Authentic happiness is where an individual experiences positive emotions in both the past and the present.[18] The three main aspects of happiness are (1) satisfaction and self-pleasure, often referred to as *hedonia*; (2) happiness as engagement with the present moment; (3) finding more meaning beyond oneself, sometimes referred to as *eudaimonia*.[19] An individual has optimism about the future. The concept of authentic happiness, according to L.W. Sumner, can be seen as a way out of the dilemma of hedonistic theories that emphasize happiness as a subjective experience and personal power. Authentic happiness is well-being.[20]

Seligman's theory of authentic happiness emphasizes an individual's effort to achieve a meaningful life. All of an individual's activities are attempts to find 'meaning' and adapt to absolute power, such as according to religious teachings. Allport explained that meaning can be found by placing oneself in a broader framework of meaning, as in religion.[21] Religion is a social system for an individual's attitudes and behaviors. Religion can become a reliable system of meaning.[22] A person will attain a meaningful life when their behavior is based on objective values present or developing within society, as stated by Peterson and Seligman.[23]

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[16] Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, "Hedonia, Eudaimonia, and Well-Being: An Introduction," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-006-9018-1.

[17] Rodríguez-Hernández, "The Eudemonic and Hedonic Role of Happiness in a Population with High Levels of Life Satisfaction / El Rol Eudemónico y Hedónico de La Felicidad En Una Población Con Altos Niveles de Satisfacción Con La Vida."

[18] Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002).

[19] Waterman, "Reconsidering Happiness."

[20] L. W. Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

[21] Gordon W. Allport, *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (Oxford, England: Holt, Reinhart & Winston, 1961).

[22] Robert A. Emmons, "Religion in the Psychology of Personality: An Introduction," *Journal of Personality* 67, no. 6 (1999): 874–88, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.00076.

[23] Christopher Peterson and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (New York: American Psychological Association, 2004).

Veenhoven divides theories of happiness into three parts: set-point theory, cognitive theory, and affective theory. In the set-point theory, happiness is something programmed within a person and is not related to how their life is. Happiness is influenced by personality traits, genetics, and culture. In cognitive theory, happiness is a product of human thinking and reflection on the difference between their actual and desired life perceptions. In affective theory, happiness is a reflection of how well a person evaluates their life overall.[24] People should be happy if they feel good about most aspects of their life. Seligman[25] and Huan[26] mention several theories of happiness, including hedonism, desire theory, objective list theory, and authentic theory. Hedonism theory states that happiness is related to efforts to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. It involves experiencing positive feelings in an individual. Happy individuals are often seen smiling or with a glint in their eyes. Desire theory states that happiness is related to the fulfilment of individual desires. Fulfilment of desires can increase a person's happiness regardless of the pleasure it brings. According to objective list theory, happiness is achieved if an individual can fulfil various desired goals, such as material needs, freedom, health, education, knowledge, and friendship. In authentic theory, happiness is related to three aspects: a pleasant life, a good life, and a meaningful life.[27] Hence, happiness is also concerned with emotional resilience and emotional wellbeing.[28]

2. *Happiness in the Perspective of Islam*

The concept of happiness in Islam is different from the perspective of hedonism. According to Islam, true happiness is not solely based on bodily desires but on human values concerning God, nature, and oneself. Happiness in Islam is inseparable from the

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[24] Ruut Veenhoven, "The Utility of Happiness," *Social Indicators Research* 20, no. 4 (August 1, 1988): 333–54, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00302332.

[25] Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*.

[26] Peter H. Huang, "Authentic Happiness, Self-Knowledge and Legal Policy," *Minnesota Journal of Law, Science & Technology* 9 (2008): 755.

[27] Theresia Puji Rahayu, "Determinan Kebahagiaan Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ekonomi dan Bisnis* 19, no. 1 (August 1, 2016): 149–70, https://doi.org/10.24914/jeb.v19i1.485.

[28] Pavithra Lakshmi Narasimhan and Heru Saputra, "Contriving Emotional Resilience through Spirituality in the Light of Vedanta," *IJoReSH: Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity* 2, no. 1 (2023). https://doi.org/10.18326/ijoresh.v2i1.1-21

function of humans as God's vicegerents on earth. Therefore, happiness is achieved by individuals who perform their duties and fulfil their role as *khalīfah fī-l-arḍ*. In this context, the perspective of *eudaimonia* seems to have some similarity with the Islamic perspective.

In the perspective of the Qur'an, happiness is referred to as *sa'ādah* (al-Hūd: 105; 108). There are also other terms used, such as *falāḥ* (success), *farḥ* (joy), *fawz* (victory) and *surūr* (delight). Happiness can be attained by humans in this world and the hereafter, although achieving happiness in the hereafter is more important. In the study of Sofia and Sari, there are seventeen indicators of happiness, including (1) faith and piety, (2) understanding of religion, (3) righteous deeds, (4) patience, (5) gratitude, (6) purification of the soul, (7) commanding good and forbidding evil, (8) striving in the path of Allah, (9) seeking Allah's pleasure and obtaining it, (10) remembrance of Allah, (11) receiving Allah's mercy, (12) self-improvement and repentance, (13) setting a good example for others, (14) seeking protection from Allah, (15) submission, (16) rejecting evil with good, (17) guarding one's words and actions.[29] Happiness is closely related to an individual's attitude of faith and piety towards Allah. Happiness will be formed when humans are sincere in their submission to Allah. Many verses explain that if one is pious, Allah will grant them happiness. Therefore, numerous studies have been conducted on the impact of piety on employees' happiness.[30]

Islamic studies on happiness have been conducted in both classical and modern times. Islamic views on happiness have been extensively explained in exegesis, hadith, fiqh, Sufism, philosophy, and other disciplines. This is because happiness is a condition that every human being seeks in life. The concept of happiness is central to Islamic studies. Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030) distinguished happiness into two levels. First, humans are bound to material things and find happiness in them, but they still long for spiritual happiness and strive to attain it. Second, humans who free themselves from attachment to material things find inner peace and happiness. Perfect happiness is spiritual happiness, which can elevate humans to nobility, while

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[29] Nanum Sofia and Endah Puspita Sari, "Indikator Kebahagiaan (*al-Sa'adah*) dalam Perspektif Alquran dan Hadis," *Psikologika: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Penelitian Psikologi* 23, no. 2 (2018): 91–108, https://doi.org/10.20885/psikologika.vol23.iss2.art2.
[30] Maham and Bhatti, "Impact of Taqwa (Islamic Piety) on Employee Happiness: A Study of Pakistan's Banking Sector," 1–22.

material happiness may lead to regret and hinder the development of the soul towards the presence of Allah.[31]

Just as the body cannot be separated from the soul, and the soul needs the body, spiritual happiness is incomplete without bodily happiness.[32] While spiritual happiness is essential, bodily happiness should not be neglected to achieve spiritual happiness. The same goes for responding to the issue of happiness in this world and the hereafter. Is worldly happiness not important? Happiness can also be attained in this world, although true and lasting happiness is only experienced in the hereafter. Therefore, every individual must seek happiness in this world while also striving for happiness in the hereafter.[33]

The concepts of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali also need to be presented, as his views on happiness are well-known in Muslim society, especially among Sunni Muslims. At least his views on happiness can be studied in the books *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) and *Kīmīyā al-Sa'ādah* (Alchemy of Happiness). To understand the composition of happiness, one must be familiar with four elements: knowledge of oneself, knowledge of Allah, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of the hereafter.[34] In his explanation, al-Ghazali tried to elucidate true happiness. He divided the faculties of the soul into animalistic, demonic, and angelic. In humans, there are desires, anger, and reason. Each has its role in human nature, so individuals do not need to eliminate any of them. However, the most crucial thing is for reason to subdue desires and anger so that they do not control reason. If they control reason, the human soul will be corrupted.[35]

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[31] L. U. Ilmi, "Unsur-Unsur Tahdzīb al-Akhlāq Karya Ibnu Miskawaih Pada Bimbingan Konseling Permendiknas" (Undergraduate Thesis, Semarang, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Walisongo Semarang, 2018), 48–49.

[32] Aris Widodo, Akh Kholis Hayatuddin, and Cintami Farmawati, "Stations (*Maqamat*) and States (*Ahwal*) in the Context of Humanity Studies: Dialogical Encounter of Spirituality and the Psychology of Religion," *IJoReSH: Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity* 2, no. 1 (2023). https://doi.org/10.18326/ijoresh.v2i1.22-42

[33] Abdurrahman Badawi, "Miskawaih," in *A History of Muslim Philoshophy*, ed. M.M. Sharif (New Delhi: Low Price Publication, 1961), 469–79.

[34] Imam Al-Ghazali, "Kimiya al-Sa`adah (Kimia Ruhani Kebahagiaan Abadi)," 2001, 6.

[35] Ibid., 14.

According to al-Ghazali, true happiness cannot be separated from the knowledge of God, "Knowledge of God is the only highest subject of knowledge, so someone who successfully achieves it will undoubtedly experience the peak of pleasure."[36] Al-Ghazali placed knowledge of Allah (*ma'rifah*) as the ultimate goal of a person's learning. Whatever discipline is studied, its ultimate aim is to know Allah better.

Belief in the supernatural can enhance happiness, so the relationship between religion and happiness is proven.[37] Many studies have shown a positive relationship between religiosity and happiness.[38] For instance, the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists states that an individual's spirituality forms the basis for meaningful activities.[39] Spirituality may also as a foundation of crisis awareness which may have an impact to the achievement of happiness.[40] Thus, there have been many scientific studies indicating that religion or spirituality has a positive influence on achieving happiness.

Understanding Happiness Orientations among Rural Javanese Muslims

To understand the perspectives and orientations of Muslim happiness, this research instrument considers various happiness perspectives, including hedonic, religious, objective theory, cognitive theory, set-point theory, and social comparison. These different perspectives are used to determine the tendencies of Muslim happiness orientations. The results of this study show that respondents' orientations towards happiness are not the same. However, overall, the tendency towards religious happiness is more

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[36] Ibid., 23.

[37] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and John D. Patton, "Le Bonheur, l'expérience Optimale et Les Valeurs Spirituelles: Une Étude Empirique Auprès d'adolescents," *Revue Québécoise de Psychologie* 18, no. 2 (1997): 169–92.

[38] Harold G. Koenig, David B. Larson, and Susan S. Larson, "Religion and Coping with Serious Medical Illness," *Annals of Pharmacotherapy* 35, no. 3 (March 1, 2001): 352–59, https://doi.org/10.1345/aph.10215.

[39] Robinson, Kennedy, and Harmon, "Happiness: A Review of Evidence Relevant to Occupational Science."

[40] Maike Maria Domsel, "Drifting away from Religion? A Perspective from German Teacher Education," *IJoReSH: Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity* 1, no. 2 (2022). https://doi.org/10.18326/ijoresh.v1i2.123-145

dominant compared to other happiness orientations found in the mentioned perspectives.

Among the various tendencies, the majority of respondents believed that happiness is achieved through fulfilling spiritual or *ukhrawī* needs, following Allah's commandments, and avoiding His prohibitions while also meeting their material needs. Fulfilling spiritual needs is given priority over material needs, although meeting material needs is also necessary to achieve a state of happiness.

In addition to these tendencies, the need to build togetherness and share with others is also an orientation toward happiness for some respondents. As social beings, they find happiness in good social interactions with their community or society. Friendship was important as it allowed them to socialize and express feelings, thoughts, or desires. Recognizing the significance of interpersonal connections, respondents expressed discomfort with loneliness and emphasized the value of interacting with others and exchanging experiences. Having good neighbours and living in a harmonious and united community or society is their main aspiration. Their responses suggest that in their view individualistic attitudes alone cannot create happiness, while social or prosocial attitudes can bring about happiness.

Table 1. Respondents' Orientations of Happiness

No.	Aspect	Percentage
1	Fulfillment of religious or spiritual goals.	21
2	Ability to provide benefits to others.	18.5
3	Ability to interpret life events or make good sense of what is owned, being grateful and putting trust in God (*tawakkul*).	14.3
4	Good relationships with friends and neighbours.	14
5	Ability to achieve various desired goals (material needs, freedom, health) that are worldly in nature.	13.1
6	Enhanced capability to align one's lifestyle with the traditions or preferences of parents, or to harmonize with the lofty ambitions envisioned for one's life.	10
7	Being free from pain and enjoying physical pleasures.	7.3
8	Experiencing a heightened sense of self-worth or superiority compared to other	1.8
		100

Based on the data obtained from the interviews, four farmer respondents from different districts presented similar tendency in

their understanding of happiness. All of them stated that the fulfillment of religious or *ukhrawī* desires (spiritual goals) are most important to achieve happiness. They also expressed that they feel happy when they can benefit others. Consequently, having good social relationships, good neighbors, and friendships were in their view important to achieve happiness. The informants also mentioned that the fulfillment of various worldly desires (e.g., material needs, freedom, health) is not essential. Some even considered it as not important at all, although one respondent viewed it as significant. Further, avoiding pain and enjoying physical pleasures are not vital prerequisites for obtaining happiness. Instead, what mattered most to them was their ability to perform the obligatory acts of worship (e.g., prayers, fasting) well, seek closeness with Allah, and help others. If these aspects can be achieved, then happiness can be obtained.

As for the trader respondents, they presented more pronounced differences in their understanding of happiness, while agreeing that it is most important to perform the obligatory acts of worship and seeking closeness with Allah as essential to achieve happiness. Regarding the fulfillment of various worldly desires, they also considered them equally essential to achieve happiness. In this aspect the traders' perspective differed from the farmers' perspective, who found it less important. However, they believed that sharing their blessings and helping others contributes to their happiness, in addition to having good social relationships with their family, neighbours, and friends.

The same trends were also observed among the respondents who worked as teachers. In their view, happiness is attained when they can approach Allah and perform daily acts of worship, fulfil their religious obligations, and avoid committing sins. They feel that their religiosity makes them happy, and the *ukhrawī* needs are of utmost importance. Apart from these priorities, they believe that fulfilling material needs and health are crucial for attaining happiness. Therefore, attaining financial stability and maintaining good health are deemed crucial for happiness. Moreover, respondents highlighted that sharing and assisting others contribute significantly to their happiness while displaying egoism and self-centeredness are not conducive to happiness.

Considering the respondents' job categories, there does not seem to be a significant difference in the orientation toward

happiness among individuals from different occupational backgrounds. In other words, respondents with similar occupations did not share the exact same orientation towards happiness. However, most of them placed the role of fulfilling their religious or *ukhrawī* desires above all for achieving happiness, followed by their ability to enjoy wealth, freedom, and good health (objective theory). They also felt happy when they could help others. Though not the main goal or priority for respondents, they also saw it as necessary to (1) be able to interpret life events or appreciate what they have, express gratitude, and rely on God (cognitive theory); (2) enjoy friendships and maintain good relationships with their friends and neighbors; (3) avoid pain and have physical pleasures (hedonic) as conditions that can make them happy. However, most of the informants tried to avoid comparing their status to others, whether they were better off or worse off. They did not feel it was good to feel better about themselves when discovering that others had it worse.

In conclusion, the respondents placed their spiritual needs above their other needs in their efforts to achieve happiness. Their overall orientation was clearly towards religiosity which promised true and lasting happiness, rather than the fulfillment of worldly pleasures.

Exploring the Pathways to Authentic Happiness

1. Islamic Perspective on True Happiness

Happiness refers to the pleasure and satisfaction derived from well-being, security, or fulfilment of desires. Happiness can be understood as the achievement of goals or success in what is desired.[41] According to Suryomentaraman's philosophy, happiness is a state of tranquillity, comfort, and lack of conflict, and it is not bound to anything unnecessary.[42]

According to the respondents, happiness is a state of their peaceful and tranquil mind due to the fulfilment of both external and internal needs, accompanied by gratitude to Allah. The respondents' understanding of happiness emphasizes the fulfilment of both spiritual and material needs and the feeling of gratitude for what they are given. This conception of happiness tends more towards religious happiness, although it does not neglect physical happiness. Physical happiness is seen merely as a means to achieve religious happiness.

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[41] Sarmadi, *Psikologi Positif*, 24.
[42] Rahayu, "Determinan Kebahagiaan di Indonesia."

When related to the above concept of happiness, the respondents' concept of happiness aligns more with authentic happiness theory or *eudaimonia*. Their conception of happiness is not pragmatic or hedonic, emphasizing only external pleasures. They felt that external pleasures alone cannot provide genuine happiness; therefore, true happiness lies in religious happiness.

This belief that true happiness is religious happiness is a core belief among *santri*s that has been taught and instilled into them since early childhood. The lessons taught in the Islamic schools (*madrasah*) include articles of faith, jurisprudence, and morality-mysticism, emphasizing religious and spiritual happiness. Based on the Islamic teachings, true happiness is achieved when following God's commands and avoiding all of His prohibitions.

Although the respondents emphasized religious attitudes to achieve happiness, they did not overlook the fulfilment of material needs to support happiness. They felt that material needs alone cannot guarantee happiness but prioritization of one's spiritual needs. Material needs or physical needs were understood as supporting the attainment of spiritual happiness. Thus, spiritual happiness, not materialistic happiness, controlled their state of happiness.

Islam emphasizes the balanced fulfilment of both physical and spiritual needs, with the spiritual or the afterlife as the guiding purpose. This doctrine is deeply rooted in Islamic sources, including the Qur'an and Hadith. A well-known supplication is often recited by Muslims asking Allah for the good of this world and the good in the afterlife, emphasizing that the hereafter is superior to this world because it is lasting and eternal.

True happiness in Islam is not limited to the fulfilment of bodily desires but focuses on human values concerning God, nature, and other human beings. Happiness in Islam cannot be separated from the role of humans as God's stewards on earth, who must perform their prescribed duties accordingly.

The beliefs acquired through their *madrasah* or *pesantren* education seemed to be maintained by the informants throughout their adult lives, albeit with slight variations. This also indicates that their understanding of happiness is a construct based on the doctrines they have learned and their individual experiences over time. Some studies on happiness argue that it is subjective, as each individual is

the best judge of their own happiness.[43] Happiness is subjective and difficult to measure and generalize between individuals. When considering the two types of happiness, physical and spiritual, the measures of happiness more often assess physical perspectives; therefore, measuring spiritual happiness remains challenging.

2. The Essence of Happiness: A Philosophical Inquiry

The philosophers have tried to answer the question of whether happiness is experienced by the soul, the body, or both. This discourse has been ongoing since the time of the ancient Greek philosophers. According to Plato (c. 427-348 BCE), happiness can only be experienced by the soul. On the other hand, Aristotle (384-322 BCE) believed that happiness can be experienced by humans in the world, although the soul is still connected to the body. However, happiness may differ according to each individual. According to Aristotle, there are three types of happiness: happiness of the soul, which includes knowledge, wisdom, and truth; physical happiness, which includes health, beauty of the body parts, and good character; and external happiness, which includes having good and noble descendants and having true friends.[44]

The Persian philosopher Ibn Miskawayh (932-1030) reconciled the views of Plato and Aristotle by concluding that happiness should encompass both aspects. Ibn Miskawayh distinguished between two levels of happiness. First, there are individuals bound to material things and find happiness through them, yet they still long for spiritual happiness and strive to attain it. Second, some individuals detach themselves from material attachments and find happiness through their souls. Complete happiness lies in spiritual happiness, which can elevate a person's character. On the other hand, physical happiness can lead to regrets and hinder the development of the soul towards the presence of God.[45]

Happiness is experienced by the soul, although it is conveyed through the physical body. Happiness is experienced not by the physical body itself but by the soul, the body merely serving as a medium. Many physical pleasures can lead to happiness, such as the

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[43] Sarmadi, *Psikologi Positif*, 26.
[44] Ilmi, "Unsur-Unsur *Tahdzib al-Akhlāq* Karya Ibnu Miskawaih Pada Bimbingan Konseling Permendiknas," 48–49.
[45] Ibid. See also Badawi, "Miskawaih."

pleasure of food, a comfortable home, good transportation, the smiling faces of family members, and recreational entertainment. However, it is the soul that feels the pleasure of all these physical pleasures. Plato asserts that pleasure is experienced by the soul.

Similarly, with knowledge, it is the intellect that understands knowledge, not the senses. The senses serve as a means to input sensory data, yet it is the intellect that derives meaning from them. The senses alone cannot comprehend this data which is understood by the intellect. This understanding can be understood from Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) perspective on the stages of human knowledge through the senses.

In conclusion, it is the soul, with its faculties, that experiences happiness. There are vegetative and animal faculties that feel happiness when the body experiences physical pleasures, and there are rational faculties that feel happiness when individuals acquire knowledge and realize that they are in accordance with norms or rules.

3. The Complexities of Happiness

Dutt and Radcliff (1989) stated that happiness is determined by several factors. The first factor is the nature or characteristic of a person, which tends to be stable and influenced by genetic, cultural, and early-life experiences. Psychologists refer to this as the set point theory. The second factor is social comparison, where individuals assess their quality of life not in absolute terms but relative to others. For example, when their income increases, it may not necessarily increase their happiness as they compare it with the income of others. The third factor is satisfaction needs where happiness is determined by the fulfilment of essential needs such as family relationships, health, job, and financial stability.[46]

Further, several factors related to an individual's living situation influence the realization of their perceived happiness. Veenhoven stated that happiness is achieved when there is economic well-being, appreciation for freedom and democracy, and political stability.[47] Relationships, including family and friendships, also play a significant role in creating happiness. Close personal relationships with others

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[46] Rahayu, "Determinan Kebahagiaan Di Indonesia."
[47] Veenhoven, "The Utility of Happiness," *Social Indicators Research*, 333–54.

strongly influence happiness.[48] Various studies have explored the relationship between happiness and health, work, life goals, religion, friendships, and environmental conditions.[49] Veenhoven reviewed previous studies on happiness and health and concluded that physical health is important for achieving happiness; however, mental health is considered crucial.[50]

Meta-analysis studies showed that work has a positive relationship with well-being. There are three theories that can explain the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction, namely the spill-over model, the compensatory approach, and the segmentation model.[51] According to the spill-over model, when someone is satisfied with their job, it will have a positive effect on other aspects of their life outside of work, and vice versa. The compensation model suggests that those who are dissatisfied with their job will seek pleasure in activities outside of work. This model explains that there is no direct relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction.[52]

The income paradox, known as the 'Easterlin Paradox,' was first studied by the American economist Richard Easterlin (b. 1926)[53], who suggests that increasing income may not necessarily increase an individual's well-being or happiness. Clark et al. found similar results all across the United States. This paradox indicates that factors other than material income influence happiness. Relative income, income comparison,[54] and income aspirations[55] play a more important role in

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Roderick D. Iverson and Catherine Maguire, "The Relationship between Job and Life Satisfaction: Evidence from a Remote Mining Community," *Human Relations* 53, no. 6 (June 1, 2000): 807–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726700536003.

[52] Robinson, Kennedy, and Harmon, "Happiness: A Review of Evidence Relevant to Occupational Science."

[53] Richard A. Easterlin, "Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence," in *Nations and Households in Economic Growth*, ed. Paul A. David and Melvin W. Reder (Academic Press, 1974), 89–125, https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-205050-3.50008-7.

[54] Andrew E. Clark and Claudia Senik-Leygonie, *Happiness and Economic Growth: Lessons from Developing Countries* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

[55] Bruno S. Frey and Alois Stutzer, "Happiness and Public Choice," *Public Choice* 144, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 557–73, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-010-9681-y.

happiness, while non-material factors related to social dimensions of human well-being are also significant.[56]

Many studies suggest that increasing income does not necessarily affect happiness. The relationship between income and happiness has been widely studied. Data show that income and happiness have a relationship for those living in poverty, where income is a crucial predictor of happiness in developing countries.[57]

From an economic point of view, happiness is not solely determined by income levels but also by life satisfaction. While income remains an indicator in measuring happiness, it is not the only factor. Other indicators, such as health, employment status, marital status, and civil trust, are used to measure an individual's happiness level.[58]

A happiness index has been developed to assess the well-being of a society. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) began using this index in 2011, and it has since been implemented in countries like the UK, France, Australia, Malaysia, and Thailand. In Indonesia, the level of societal well-being is measured using a happiness index. Predictors used to calculate the average happiness score include Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy at birth, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption.[59]

It is important to note that respondents' perceptions of factors that make them happy may not align precisely with the description provided above, as the description primarily focuses on external factors. According to the respondents, factors that contribute to happiness include (a) the ability to worship Allah in the best possible way, (b) having sufficient material wealth and health to support the worship of Allah, (c) having a peaceful family life, (d) maintaining good relationships and friendships with others, (e) being able to benefit others, and (f) expressing gratitude to Allah for all

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[56] F. A. Huppert et al., "The Social Context of Well–Being," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B: Biological Sciences* 359, no. 1449 (September 29, 2004): 1435–46, https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2004.1522.

[57] Veenhoven, "The Utility of Happiness."

[58] Marojahan JS Panjaitan, "Legal Politics to Build a State of Happiness: An Idea in a State Based on the 1945 Constitution," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology* 10 (February 3, 2021): 486–96, https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2021.10.57.

[59] Rahayu, "Determinan Kebahagiaan di Indonesia."

circumstances. The respondents acknowledged that external factors such as income and good friendships cannot be disregarded, but they believed that happiness is a spiritual experience and thus felt by the soul. Therefore, religious factors, including gratitude, are considered crucial factors for happiness.

4. *The Power of Gratitude: A Key to Happiness in Islamic Teachings and Psychological Perspectives*

There is a commonality among the respondents in their belief that happiness can be attained if individuals are grateful to Allah for what they have been given. Gratitude is a predominant concept in Islamic teachings based on the Qur'ān[60] and Ḥadīth, and it has been extensively discussed by Muslim scholars. The importance of gratitude is instilled in the *madrasa* and *pesantren* students.

As cited by Rani Hardianti, Erika, Fathra Annis Nauli, and Listiyandini et al., gratitude is a moral impact that can encourage unselfish behavior and prioritize the well-being of others. Gratitude can foster optimism, improve quality of life, and build better friendships. Previous studies have found that gratitude can prevent depression and pathological conditions. Someone who has a high sense of gratitude will have higher control over the environmental conditions, personal development, life goals, and self-acceptance. Gratitude encourages individuals to have good coping mechanisms for life's difficulties, seek social support from others, interpret experiences from a different perspective, and have problem-solving plans.[61]

Rosmarin et al. found a relationship between religious gratitude and mental health moderated by religious involvement. Gratitude in both religious and general forms is important for mental health and well-being.[62] Research in the field of positive psychology shows a strong correlation between gratitude and happiness. Gratitude allows people to experience positive emotions, enjoy their experiences, have better health, and see diversity, all of which contribute to greater

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[60] For instance, in Surah Ibrāhīm verse 7.

[61] Rani Hardianti, Erika Erika, and Fathra Annis Nauli, "Hubungan Antara Rasa Syukur terhadap Kesehatan Mental Remaja di SMA Negeri 8 Pekanbaru," *Jurnal Ners Indonesia* 11, no. 2 (March 31, 2021): 215–27, https://doi.org/10.31258/jni.11.2.215-227.

[62] David H. Rosmarin and Harold G. Koenig, *Handbook of Spirituality, Religion, and Mental Health* (Academic Press, 2020).

happiness.[63] The English writer and philosopher Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) stated: "I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder."[64]

Moreover, Kennon M. Sheldon and Sonja Lyubomirsky posit that happiness is influenced by three primary factors: firstly, circumstances, which account for 10% of one's happiness; secondly genetics, encompassing unalterable personality traits and temperament, contributing to 50% of happiness; and thirdly intentional activities, contributing 40% to happiness.[65] Nonetheless, it's imperative to acknowledge that gratitude can foster happiness through diverse avenues.[66]

5. The Path to Happiness: Pro-social Connections and Meaningful Contributions

According to some respondents, it is essential in life to make friends and share things with others. Life cannot be lived in isolation. In line with this pro-social attitude, some respondents felt happy when they could share with others. They had a desire to help others and find happiness in being able to do so. This orientation aligns with the belief that happiness is not merely about fulfilling one's material needs but also about fulfilling one's spiritual needs. This orientation has two dimensions, social and spiritual, as a way of approaching Allah. The pro-social dimension is highly emphasized in Islam, as mentioned in an established hadith on the importance of living a life that benefits others.[67]

According to Seligman, as mentioned earlier, there are three ways to build positive human strengths. First, by having a pleasant life or a life of enjoyment, which is the path taken by hedonistic individuals. However, this can lead to the hedonic treadmill trap (i.e., the more we seek pleasure, the harder it is to satisfy us) and the habituation trap (i.e., boredom due to excessive and repetitive

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[63] https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-happiness-research/ accessed in 2021.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Kennon M. Sheldon and Sonja Lyubomirsky, "Is It Possible to Become Happier? (And If So, How?)," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 129–45, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2007.00002.x.
[66] https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-happiness-research/ accessed in 2021
[67] Hadith narrated by Muslim, Sahih Muslim, vol. VIII, page 71, Hadith no. 7028, narrated by Abu Hurayrah.

physical pleasures). Second, having a good life or a life of engagement is the path taken by those who wish to engage in work, relationships, or activities that absorb them. Third, having a meaningful life or a life of contribution and service is the path taken by those who feel that their life has a higher and more eternal meaning that extends beyond their person.[68]

Providing meaning in life is a human instinct that cannot be ignored. Humans are social creatures who must interact with other humans and their environment. Living a meaningful life can be a source of happiness and give purpose to one's existence. Human existence is measured by the extent of the meaningfulness of their life in the eyes of others and their environment. To exist means to go beyond oneself, which is to be useful to others. Selfish behaviour, closing oneself off, and individual self-centeredness are contrary to human instinct. Having a life full of meaning in society through speech, action, and thought is the gateway to happiness.[69]

Concluding Remarks

Happiness is a state of mind characterized by tranquility and comfort resulting from the fulfillment of both material and spiritual needs, accompanied by gratitude towards God. In line with this concept of happiness, the general orientation of the respondents is religious or spiritual happiness, particularly in performing acts of worship and drawing closer to God. The respondents' view of happiness is more aligned with authentic happiness (authentic theory) or eudaimonic happiness. Their happiness is not pragmatic or hedonic, nor does it solely emphasize external pleasures. They realized that external pleasures cannot provide genuine happiness and that true happiness is religious.

The majority of respondents believed that happiness can be achieved if individuals have a sense of gratitude towards Allah for what they have been given. In line with that view, they refrain from comparing themselves to others, especially those who have it worse. There is indeed a strong correlation between gratitude and happiness; however, happiness can be achieved in different ways.

Although the informants in this study had different occupations, most of them considered fulfilling their religious or

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[68] Sarmadi, *Psikologi Positif*, iv–v.
[69] Ibid.

spiritual desires and goals as the most important condition to achieve happiness. Additionally, some of them hoped to fulfil their worldly desires in the form of financial stability, freedom, and physical health, as viewed from the objective theory perspective. They experience joy when they can help others. Furthermore, some considered it essential for their happiness to maintain good relationships with their family, friends, and neighbours while avoiding pain and enjoying physical pleasures.

Although there were slight differences in their views, the respondents shared the primary orientation of happiness based on the Islamic teachings they were taught in the *madrasah*. This indicates that their understanding of happiness is a construct based on the understanding of happiness they developed when they were young and their individual life experiences since then.

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