

# Can the Level of Well-Being Buy Happiness?

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## Abstract

Mental health remains a significant concern, particularly in developing countries, where a multitude of factors, such as well-being, education, smoking habits, marital status, employment status, and gender, contribute to mental health problems. This study's primary objective is to dissect the key factors, with a focus on well-being, that adversely impact an individual's mental health. Employing survey data from IFLS encompassing approximately 17,000 observations, this research employs OLS, Logit, and Probit methodologies to forecast the likelihood of socioeconomic variables influencing depression symptoms. The findings reveal that education, marital status, occupational type, year (indicating happiness level), and expenditure exhibit a positive correlation with happiness. Remarkably, there is a coherent pattern across the OLS, Logit, and Probit models, indicating that variables such as cigarette consumption, female gender, and residing in urban or rural areas are inversely related to happiness. In conclusion, socioeconomic factors wield a discernible influence on happiness, underscoring the imperative for government intervention through policy measures, especially in bolstering well-being, to enhance individual happiness levels.

**Keywords:** happiness, poverty, income

**JEL Classification:** I31, I30, J3

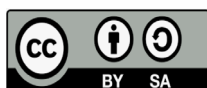
## INTRODUCTION

For most people, the meaning of life is to live a valuable life. A decent life means a good job, a good education, a good marriage, and a lot of money. All this can be called happiness. To achieve this kind of happiness, start with the best education and work at the highest possible level. But in reality, there should be some balance in life. When a person has a deserving job, they have to give up their free time, which leads to a very high income for this person but wastes a lot of time with his family. In contrast, people who have a lot of free time have lower incomes. This will cause people to fall into poverty. Poverty is a state in which basic needs cannot be met, and some people choose to work to make a lot of money instead of having a lot of free time, thus creating their happiness. This means that you can buy happiness at the expense of your happiness.

According to the "World Happiness Report", Finland is the country with the highest happiness index is 7809, and the total score for 2020 is fixed at 10 points. Finland has the highest happiness index, although its population is only around 5 million. For those registered in 2021, the GDP per

capita in 2020 is USD 48,711,564 (World Bank, 2020). GDP per capita can describe the income of the people of a country. Also, in 2020, Zimbabwe is the country with the lowest happiness index, but according to data from the World Bank (2020), its per capita GDP is US\$1,128,211, which shows that there is a positive correlation between GDP and happiness, but compared with developed countries, such as Singapore, the result will show the opposite. It ranks 32nd in the Global Happiness Report, but its per capita GDP is US\$59,797,752. This shows that high gross domestic income does not make the happiness index high.

Happiness could be very critical for the improvement of a country, wherein the extent of happiness will affect the extent of one's health. Healthy people will grow productiveness wherein the meant productiveness may be measured by the duration of running hours and the quantity of labor output produced (Zelenski et al., 2008). This will circuitously grow the GDP. Indonesia occupies the 82nd role with a happiness index of 5,345 in 2020, as measured through the use of



a lifestyle pleasure index consisting of training, family income, health, domestic conditions, and own circle of relatives' harmony. In addition, feeling indexes consist of feeling now no longer worried, feeling now no longer depressed, and feeling happy, and different indices that could degree happiness are the means of lifestyles consisting of independence, self-development, environmental mastery, lifestyle goals, superb relationships with others, and self-acceptance. The excessive common degree of happiness of the Indonesian populace is because of numerous different factors, particularly the extent of training and marital status (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Besides that, Indonesia has a 3,869,588 US\$ GDP, which is consistent with per capita. This indicates superb dating as compared to Finland, so it's vital to do studies that show the connection between poverty and happiness. Is it through prosperity that happiness is created by itself? or perhaps people who don't seem to be prosperous can feel happier.

This looks at the awareness of how the connection among poverty is measured through consistency with per capita expenditure on individual happiness. In addition, there are numerous assisting variables consisting of gender, marital status, training, cigarette consumption, and sort of work. In this look, this subject matter studied the use of IFLS four; however, in this look, statistics units have been used, particularly IFLS 4 and IFLS 5.

This research contributes to the field by exploring the intricate relationship between well-being, socioeconomic factors, and happiness, particularly in the context of developing countries. The novelty lies in the comprehensive analysis of diverse variables, such as education, marital status, occupational type, year, and expenditure, through rigorous statistical methodologies like OLS, Logit, and Probit models. By utilizing survey data from IFLS with approximately 17,000 observations, the study identifies key factors that significantly influence an individual's mental health, shedding light on the nuanced interplay between socioeconomic conditions and happiness levels. Moreover, the research addresses the impact of cigarette consumption, gender, and

urban or rural residence on happiness, unveiling patterns that resonate across different statistical models. The study underscores the importance of government interventions in policy formulation, emphasizing the enhancement of well-being to elevate individual happiness levels. Despite the lack of a clear argument and literature support from the author, the research novelly contributes to the understanding of happiness dynamics in developing countries, paving the way for future investigations in this crucial area.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

It was recorded that from 2006 to 2019, Indonesia's financial condition continued to say no slowly (World Bank, 2020). The extent of poverty is one of the socioeconomic standings of people, which will influence individual behavior, wherever the level of individual poverty can affect the level of happiness within their lives. According to Borrero et al. (2013) and (Saunders, 1996), poverty features an important negative relationship moving a person's level of happiness. Different studies have shown that financial gain doesn't have a relationship with the level of happiness, this is often discovered in the analysis (Rojas, 2011). However, according to (Schimmel, 2009), there's a big positive relationship between happiness and poverty. Analysis (Mahadea & Rawat, 2008) states that people who have plenty of cash can increase the likelihood of their happiness level by 16.2%. The financial condition causes the individual's ability to fulfill the wants of life to be minimal. Wherever the cut-back utility is, it will reduce individual happiness (Harsanyi, 1996). However, in keeping with (Va & Panadero, 2015), poverty features a positive relationship with happiness, may be} thanks to poor individuals not solely mensuration happiness through their income, it can be influenced by many aspects admire the encompassing conditions operating together to run a life. Additionally, relating to happiness that has an impression on health, in keeping with (Diener & Chan, 2011), happiness is one indicator that the individual is healthy. Healthy people can increase productivity (Zelenski et al., 2008). In addition to poverty, different variables will affect

individual happiness, such as education, the form of work, gender, marital status, age, and range of smoke consumption.

(Blanchflower, 2004) states that people who work as staff have 1.8% higher utility than entrepreneurs. This higher level of happiness happens as a result of entrepreneurs being faced with high risk, so they tend to feel stress a lot simply compared to employees who always work consistent with company rules and don't suppose the risks they're going to face to the company. Besides, according to (George et al., 1996) aforesaid that ladies have a better level of happiness 1% compared to men. According to (Russel & Wells, 1994), married individuals are going to be happier than singles, this is often because married individuals have the smallest errors in making decisions. However, if look for married girls, they need a lower likelihood of happiness. (Ross & Mlrowsky, 1984) aforesaid that married women tend to have 1.75% higher rates of depression than married men. Married women can have bigger dependents (Thompson et al., 1990). additionally, on top of variables, there are instructional variables that also affect individual happiness. Consistent with (Aletraris, 2010), in developing countries, it was found that people with a high education level tend to be happier by 0.7% compared to individuals with a lower school education. Age is additionally a variable that can affect the amount of happiness. (Gerdtham & Johannesson, 2001) explicitly that individual happiness can still decline to a minimum purpose of forty-five years and so increase once more at age 45 years and over. In general, poorness will affect happiness, however, don't grasp whether or not it has a positive or negative impact, particularly for the country of Indonesia. Besides that, happiness is additionally influenced by many different supporting factors, particularly education, variety of work, gender, marital status, age, and variety of smoke consumption.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Data

This study uses data from IFLS (Indonesian Family Life Survey), IFLS is large-scale data and longitudinal data that includes data from household surveys (RAND, 2014). The IFLS was collected every seven years in 1993, 1997, 2000, 2007, and 2014 and can describe 83% of the population of Indonesia, where there are more than 30,000 large households in 17 of the 32 provinces. This study uses IFLS 4 and IFLS 5 and is used to use several variables that were used for this study, namely individual expenditure, gender, individual education level, type of job, marital status, cigarette smoking, and individual happiness level.

This study included more than 37,000 respondents with an average spend of more than 12 million in 2007, which decreased to more than 7 million in 2014. Most of the respondents, around 64%, are formal. Correspondents have a primary school education, another 30% have an upper secondary education. The lowest number of courses is the S1 level, with several correspondents of no more than 15%. The women in this study were just no more than 40%, and about 75% of the correspondents were married. Correspondents who smoke use an average of 5 cigarettes a day. In 2007, the number of happy people was 30.35%, while in 2024, correspondent satisfaction increased sharply to 77.01%.

### Research Methods

This study uses panel data and is regressed using logit, probit, and OLS models, to analyze the relationship between socioeconomic status and happiness itself. In this study, the dependent variable used is a binary variable that requires logistic regression models such as logit or probit to analyze the relationship between independent variables and the probability of an event occurring. This may reflect the negative value of individual behavior caused by some factors. In addition,

including OLS along with logit and probit models in this study can fulfill various purposes, such as ease of interpretation, comparison, and checking certain assumptions. The evaluation in this study used the logit model (1)

The dependent variable, happiness, is measured using the CESD score, which is a scale that everyone has used to measure their feelings in the past week. The scales included in the IFLS 5 and IFLS 4 questionnaires were processed using Winstep software. So, the CESD estimate appeared, and then the upper and lower limits of the CESD estimate were used as dummy variables. If the artificially generated CESD score is higher than the upper limit or lower than the lower limit, it is called simple or coded as “0”, and vice versa.

In addition, several other variables can also affect the level of individual happiness, such as demographic factors, including education, marital status, occupation, region of residence, and gender. Apart from demographics, there is a smoke variable, which also influences the dependent variable. Smoking is often associated with addictive habits, and when a person is dependent on nicotine, the loss of access to cigarettes can cause stress and anxiety. Therefore,

one’s level of happiness can be affected by the level of dependence and stress associated with smoking.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The panel regression analysis using OLS, Probit, and Logit reveals that independent variables, which are education, married status, job status, expenditure, and year dummy, have a positive impact on happiness and are statistically significant. The panel regression on urban areas shows indifferent results compared to general panel regression, where those independent variables are education, married status, job status, expenditure, and year dummy, which have a positive impact on happiness by statistics. However, the panel regression on rural areas reveals that the independent variables that are statistically significant on happiness are only education and year dummy. Those panel regression, either by urban area or by rural area, reveals consistent results by all methods, which are OLS, Probit, and Logit. The consistency of the results in the three regressions with different methods indicates that the model used is robust and also fit.

$$happiness_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 ln\_exp_{it} + \beta_2 edc_{level} + \beta_3 smoke_{it} + \beta_4 fam_{it} + \beta_5 married_{it} + \beta_6 job_{it} + \beta_6 year_{it} + \beta_6 urbanrural_{it} \epsilon_{it} \tag{1}$$

**Table 1.** Variable Description

No	Explanation	Description	Variable Name
1	Feeling in the past week	1: Happy 0: Unhappy	happiness
2	Type of Jobs	1: Formal 0: Informal	job
3	Expenditure in one month	Rp	ln_exp
4	Gender	1: Female 0: Male	Fem
5	Higher education	1: Elementary School 2: Junior High School 3: Senior High School 4: Bachelor	educ_level
6	Cigarettes in one day	Per stem	smoke
7	Marital Status	1: Married 0: Single	married

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics

No	Variable Name	Description	Mean	Percentage
1	happiness	1: Happy 0: Unhappy		1: 55.39% 0: 44.61%
2	job	1: Formal 0: Informal		1: 61.86% 0: 38.14%
3	ln_exp	IDR	IDR 8.210.286	
4	fem	1: Female 0: Male		1: 32.64% 0: 67.36%
5	educ_level	1: Elementary School 2: Junior High School 3: Senior High School 4: Bachelor		1: 41.28% 2: 17.32% 3: 27.50% 4: 13.90%
6	smoke	Per stem	6 Stem	
7	married	1: Married 0: Single		1: 84.58% 0: 15.42%

The panel regression result with all respondents shows that higher education is more likely for the respondents to feel happier. Using panel regression with OLS, Probit, and Logit shows the respondents with higher education contribute to happiness by 0.816%, 2.71%, and 4.68%, respectively. Marital status is also significantly affected by happiness by 3.04% (OLS), 10.2% (Probit), and 17.3% (Logit). Moreover, job status, which means formal job, has contributed to making people happier. By OLS, Probit, and Logit analysis, the results show that they are each by 1.19%, 4.03%, and 6.71%. The respondents who have high expenditures are more likely to be happier than those who have low expenditures. The panel regression then reveals that increasing expenditure by 10% contributes to a more likely increase in happiness of 0.125% (OLS), 0.42% (Probit), and 0.70% (Logit). Meanwhile, respondents' levels of happiness from IFLS 4 (2007) to IFLS 5 (2015) are more likely to be happier, which means that the respondents' happiness in 2015 is relatively better than in the previous period.

Based on Table 3, the regression results show that there is consistency between the OLS, Logit, and Probit models, where the variable number of cigarette consumption, female gender, and city/village have a negative relationship to happiness, with the respective probabilities being 0.05%, 0.51%, 1.07. % in the OLS model, while in the probit model, the probabilities of each variable

are 0.2%, 1.94%, and 3.7%, and in the Logit model, the probabilities are 0.3%, 2.8%, and 6.29%.

Besides that, the variables of education, married individuals, type of work, year (happiness level), and expenditure have a positive relationship to happiness. The higher spending on the OLS, Probit, and Logit models will increase the probability of happiness by 1.25%, 4.2%, and 7%, respectively. This is contrary to research by (Borrero et al., 2013) and (Saunders, 1996), which state that spending has a significant negative relationship with happiness. According to (Va & Panadero, 2015) which states that individuals with low expenditures have a positive relationship to happiness, this is due to poor individuals not only measuring happiness through their spending but can be influenced by several aspects, such as the surrounding conditions that work together to run a life. However, the results of the regression on expenditure are in line with the research of (Mahadea & Rawat, 2008) which states that individuals who have a lot of money will increase the probability of their happiness by 16.2%. Poverty causes the individual's ability to meet the needs of life is minimal. The inability to consume goods and services will reduce individual satisfaction. Where reduced satisfaction will reduce individual happiness (Harsanyi, 1996). The results of the above regression on expenditures are also supported by (DeLeire & Kalil, 2010), who state that an increase in spending of \$10,000 will increase

**Table 3.** Regression Results

Variables	xtregall	xtregurban	xtregrural	xtprobitall	Xtprobiturban	xtprobitrural	xtlogitall	xtlogiturban	xtlogitrural
	happiness	happiness	happiness	happiness	Happiness	happiness	happiness	happiness	happiness
smoke	-0.000550 (0.000446)	-0.000677 (0.000588)	-0.000348 (0.000689)	-0.00200 (0.00150)	-0.00245 (0.00202)	-0.00130 (0.00227)	-0.00323 (0.00257)	-0.00407 (0.00348)	-0.00201 (0.00387)
Educ	0.00816** (0.00105)	0.00689*** (0.00136)	0.00972*** (0.00166)	0.0271*** (0.00354)	0.0234*** (0.00467)	0.0317*** (0.00551)	0.0468*** (0.00604)	0.0405*** (0.00797)	0.0542*** (0.00937)
married	0.0304*** (0.00984)	0.0400*** (0.0124)	0.0149 (0.0162)	0.102*** (0.0319)	0.134*** (0.0407)	0.0517 (0.0517)	0.173*** (0.0546)	0.229*** (0.0696)	0.0866 (0.0883)
fem	-0.00511 (0.00848)	-0.0131 (0.0109)	0.00750 (0.0134)	-0.0194 (0.0281)	-0.0460 (0.0368)	0.0215 (0.0438)	-0.0288 (0.0480)	-0.0758 (0.0631)	0.0422 (0.0742)
job	0.0119* (0.00710)	0.0230** (0.00983)	-0.000794 (0.0104)	0.0403* (0.0236)	0.0787** (0.0334)	-0.00161 (0.0338)	0.0671* (0.0402)	0.133** (0.0570)	-0.00533 (0.0574)
ln_exp	0.0125*** (0.00373)	0.0182*** (0.00504)	0.00637 (0.00555)	0.0426*** (0.0122)	0.0628*** (0.0170)	0.0214 (0.0179)	0.0708*** (0.0207)	0.105*** (0.0287)	0.0361 (0.0303)
dumyear	0.475*** (0.00695)	0.462*** (0.00929)	0.491*** (0.0105)	1.365*** (0.0273)	1.353*** (0.0375)	1.387*** (0.0420)	2.266*** (0.0502)	2.257*** (0.0694)	2.289*** (0.0779)
urban-rural	-0.0107 (0.00707)			-0.0372 (0.0235)			-0.0629 (0.0400)		
Observations	17,715	10,040	7,675	17,715	10,040	7,675	17,715	10,040	7,675
Number of id_pid	8,975	5,538	4,397	8,975	5,538	4,397	8,975	5,538	4,397

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

happiness by 14%. High spending reflects the level of individual wealth.

In urban conditions, spending has a positive relationship to happiness. This is consistent with the results found when looking at conditions that do not differentiate between cities and villages. If you look at conditions in the village, spending has consistent results, namely a positive relationship to happiness. This shows that expenditures that occur in rural, urban, or urban villages do not affect happiness because individuals with high expenditures will increase happiness. An increase in spending on the urban OLS, Probit, and Logit models will increase the happiness of each model by 1.8%, 6.2%, and 10.5%, and in the rural OLS, Probit, and Logit models will increase the happiness of each model by 0.6%, 2.1%, and 3.6%.

In addition to spending, the type of work also has a significant positive effect on happiness. From the three models used, it can be seen that there is no difference between them, but the type of work in rural areas has a negative relationship to happiness, and this is consistent between the OLS, Probit, and Logit models. The type of work is divided into three categories, namely entrepreneurs, employees, and farmers; in urban and rural areas, entrepreneurs and employees have a higher probability of happiness than farmers, but in rural areas, entrepreneurs and employees have a lower probability of happiness than farmers. This is because in rural areas, the type of work tends to be farming. In urban and rural-urban conditions, according to (Blanchflower, 2004), individuals as employees have 1.8% higher utility than individuals who have jobs as entrepreneurs. This higher level of happiness occurs because entrepreneurs will

initially be faced with high risk, so they tend to feel stress more easily compared to employees who only work according to company rules and do not think about the risks they will face for the company. In addition, if using the approach of temporary and permanent workers where farmers cannot work under all conditions, according to (Aletraris, 2010) temporary workers have a lower level of satisfaction compared to permanent workers. On the other hand, farmers can also be categorized as informal jobs where they do not have security at work and where farmers' income depends on their harvest.

In addition, another variable used by researchers to see the level of individual happiness is education, which has a positive relationship to happiness in the three models in rural, urban, and both areas. Individuals with longer education will find it easier to do jobs that match their expertise. According to (Aletraris (2010), in developing countries, it was found that individuals with a junior high school education level tend to be 0.7% happier than individuals with an elementary school education. Happiness will continue to increase along with the increase in education level; individuals with a high school education level have a 5.04% higher probability of education level than those in elementary school, and individuals with a university level have a 7.66% higher probability of happiness compared to individuals at the elementary level. If you look at the results that have been obtained, the probability of the level of happiness continues to increase from 2.90% to 5.04% to 7.66%. This is evidenced by research by Pe & Cun (2012), which results that a higher level of education will increase happiness by 2.1%. So we can conclude that individuals who have a higher level of education reflect a high duration of education, and both can increase the level of individual happiness. With a higher level of happiness, it will be easier for the individual to get a job (Tomlinson, 2008).

Gender also influences the level of individual happiness but does not have a significant effect. Overall, women have a lower probability of happiness than men in urban and rural areas, but in rural areas, women have a positive relationship

to happiness. This is consistent with (George et al., 1996) which says that women have a 1% higher level of happiness than men. Researchers (Neel et al., 2012) say that women will feel happier than men. Besides that, other variables that can affect the level of individual happiness are the amount of cigarette consumption and the rural city variable, where cigarette consumption has a negative relationship to happiness and rural towns have a negative relationship to happiness, but both have an insignificant relationship to happiness.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Several independent variables, including education, marital status, employment status, expenditure, and year dummy, were found to have a consistent positive impact on happiness across methods and urban/rural areas. Education emerged as a significant determinant of happiness, with higher levels of education contributing positively to happiness levels. The results showed that individuals with higher education were more likely to report feeling happier, a finding underscoring the importance of investing in education to improve overall well-being. Marital status also plays an essential role in determining happiness, with married individuals reporting higher happiness levels. This suggests that the social relationships and support networks associated with marriage may contribute to greater life satisfaction. Employment status, mainly formal employment, is another positive predictor of happiness, showing the importance of stable employment and economic security in improving well-being. Spending is identified as a complex factor influencing satisfaction.

Contrary to previous research, the results showed that higher spending was associated with increased happiness. Research results found that increased spending led to increased satisfaction. This suggests that individuals with more significant financial resources may have more opportunities to satisfy their needs and desires, thereby contributing to their happiness. The year dummy variable shows that happiness levels increased from IFLS 4 (2007) to IFLS 5

(2015), indicating an overall trend of growing happiness over time. This could be due to various societal changes and improvements in living standards that occurred during this period.

In addition, this research also identifies factors that hurt happiness. These variables included cigarette consumption, female gender, and living in an urban area, which were negatively associated with happiness. However, their effects were relatively small and sometimes nonsignificant. Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made: **First**, policymakers must prioritize investment in education because education has always been a significant determinant of happiness. Providing accessible, quality education can improve individual well-being in the long term. **Second**, efforts to create stable employment opportunities, especially in the formal sector, can increase people's level of happiness. Policies aimed at job creation and economic stability can positively impact overall happiness. **Third**, it is essential to address the complex relationship between spending and happiness. Although higher spending was associated with increased happiness in this study, it is crucial to consider the broader social and cultural context when interpreting these results. Policies should ensure everyone has access to essential goods and services without burdening them financially. **Lastly**, Further research is needed to explore the gender gap in happiness and the impact of cigarette consumption on well-being. Understanding these factors in more detail can inform targeted interventions to increase happiness among specific demographic groups.

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