

# Is Children The Source of Happiness?

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**Abstract.** Wellbeing is one of a goal in development. Wellbeing that is represented by happiness. One determinant of happiness has children. Happiness is created through altruism. Parents care about their children's wellbeing, and their utility increases. Children's wellbeing is achieved when they have the high quality that enables them to perceived in the community. Happiness in this study is calculated using the happiness index. This study aims to find out the impact of children: number and sex composition of their children on parents happiness. Using the Indonesian Family Life Survey 2014 and multinomial logistic regression. The descriptive analysis shows that happiness will increase when men or women have one child, then the happiness level decreased as the increase in the number of children. Supporting the analysis, multinomial logistic regression shows that men who had children with either complete or incomplete sex composition are more likely to be happier than men who do not have children. Meanwhile, women will be happier if they have children with complete sex composition. However, multinomial logistic regression result shows that having more children significantly decreases the happiness level either in men or women.

**Keywords:** Number of Children, Children Sex Composition, Happiness, IFLS5.

## 1. Introduction

The wellbeing of the whole community is one of the goals in development. There are two perspectives of wellbeing i.e. objective and subjective wellbeing [1]. Objective wellbeing or called material wellbeing is wellbeing measured from one's economic condition, whereas subjective wellbeing is an individual judgment on his wellbeing condition. Subjective wellbeing has the same meaning as life satisfaction or happiness [2]. The happiness index of the Indonesian population is 70.69 with the measurement scale of 0-100 [3]. Compared to some countries in the world, World Happiness Report 2017 showed that Indonesia is ranked 81 out of 155 of the happiest countries in the world [4]. From these two data, it can be said that the condition of Indonesian happiness is only slightly above average.

One's happiness is influenced by various factors; one of them is number of children [5]. A theory about the value of children or better known as Value of Children (VoC) Theory shows that happiness is one of the values a person can gain if he has children [6]. The value of parental happiness when having children can be explained by altruism that exists in humans.

Altruism is quite important in family life. Altruism is defined as the attachment of others, the desire to improve others well-being [7]. A person will feel their own feelings of pleasure and pain, the warmest object of affection is the people who usually live together like children, parents, or other [8]. Altruism makes parents want to give the best for their children or in other words altruism parents priority to quality than the quantity of children [9]. Having children and the quality of his child can improve parents utility which can be measured with information about happiness [10].

This study aims to find out the effect of children on happiness among married men or ever-married women in Indonesia. Happiness is seen from the individual perception towards his life satisfaction, while children is seen from the number of children and children sex composition.

## 2. Method

This study uses the Indonesia Family Life Survey (IFLS). IFLS is a longitudinal survey conducted in Indonesia. In this study, IFLS data to be used is IFLS5 data from 2014-2015 because IFLS5 is the latest IFLS and the only one wave which provided question about life satisfaction. The unit analysis used in this study is married men and ever-married women aged 15 years and older. Restrictions on marital status and age in this study due to limited information from existing data. The question of the number of children ever born is asked to women aged 15-49 years in each IFLS wave. Meanwhile, the question of happiness is also asked to respondents aged 15 years and over. Of the 58,253 IFLS samples in 2014, 8,909 married men and 12,517 women ever married 15 years and older who became unit analysis.

Happiness is the dependent variable and focus of this study. Happiness is grouped into three categories, unhappy, somewhat happy and happy. The happiness variable is derived from the question of life satisfaction. The question of life satisfaction has five choices of answers that are completely satisfied, very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very dissatisfied and not at all satisfied, which then grouped into happy, somewhat happy and unhappy. A respondent who answers completely satisfied and very satisfied are grouped into happy. Respondent who answer somewhat satisfied is grouped into happy. Respondent who answer not very satisfied and not at all satisfied are grouped into unhappy.

The main independent variables used in this study are the number of children ever born and children sex composition. The children sex composition is grouped into three categories namely no children, have children with incomplete sex composition and have children with complete sex composition. In addition to the number of children and the children sex composition, this study also wants to know some factors that affect happiness such as age, marital status, working status, education, residence, economic welfare, and health status.

In this study, the methods used are inferential analysis. The inferential analysis is used to see the effect of child number and children sex composition on happiness. The inferential analysis used in this research is multinomial logistic regression analysis.

## 3. Result and discussion

**Table 1** shows that men's happiness is affected by the number of children, children sex composition, age, education, residence, economic well-being, and health status. Meanwhile, women's happiness is influenced by the number of children, children sex composition, age, marital status, working status, education, residence, economic wellbeing, and health status. The odds ratio indicate that health status and economic well-being are the most influential on

men happiness. While the variables that affect women's happiness the most are health status and education.

**Table 1.** Odds Ratio of The Impact of Children and Control Variable on Men and Women's Happiness

Variable	Men				Women			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Happy	Somewhat happy	Happy	Somewhat happy	Happy	Somewhat happy	Happy	Somewhat happy
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Number of children	0.8910***	0.8993***	0.9207***	0.9190***	0.8446***	0.8842***	0.9214***	0.9388***
Children sex composition								
Don't have children (Ref)								
Incomplete	1.3720***	1.4293***	1.4050***	1.3899***	1.2705**	1.1109	1.1678	1.0407
Complete	1.4429***	1.6608***	1.4227**	1.5469***	1.4170***	1.2210	1.3010*	1.1323
Age								
Age	-	-	0.9491***	0.9930	-	-	0.9552**	0.9877
Age <sup>2</sup>	-	-	1.0006***	1.0001	-	-	1.0005**	1.0002
Marital status <sup>onc*)</sup>								
Married	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.444***	1.5057***
Divorce (Ref)								
Working status								
Working	-	-	1.1644	1.0266	-	-	0.8509**	0.8826*
Not working (Ref)								
Education								
Low (Ref)								
Medium	-	-	1.1829**	1.3987***	-	-	1.2603***	1.5170***
High	-	-	1.7632***	1.7282***	-	-	2.2043***	2.1253***
Residence								
Urban	-	-	1.1991***	0.9788	-	-	1.1764***	1.1625**
Rural (Ref)								
Economic wellbeing								
Low (Ref)								
Medium	-	-	1.4968***	1.3320***	-	-	1.4805***	1.3374***
High	-	-	2.3325***	1.7950***	-	-	1.9786***	1.4186***
Health status								
Healthy	-	-	2.6397***	1.9219***	-	-	2.5833***	1.8008***
Unhealthy (Ref)								

**Source :** Processed by author from IFLS2014 data, <sup>1\*)</sup>This variable only use in women model  
 \*\*\* = p<0,01, \*\* = p<0,05, \* = p<0,1

One of the children's values, as expressed by Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) in his VoC theory, is happiness. The result shows that the number of children has a significant negative effect on men's happiness. Having more children will decrease happiness among men. The same result is also obtained when it was added with several control variables. The child has the cost to be incurred by parents [11]. Having more children will increase the cost. Having more children will also make it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of children that meet their expectations. Unfulfilled expectations lead to a decrease in one's happiness. Having a

child will diminish time with his partner [12]. The feeling of diminished affection from a partner can cause unhappiness, especially in men because women are more involved in parenting. The presence of children was closely related to the decrease in happiness because it was associated with increased stress in both men and women.

The effect of the number of children on women's happiness level is in line with the result for the male sample. Having more children will decrease women's happiness. The addition of control variables does not change the significance or direction of the number of children's effect on women happiness. Children reduce maternal happiness associated with time costs; children can affect women's lives and women's work beyond their influence on men [13]. The benefits received by women due to motherhood are not worth the cost incurred [11]. Women get benefit from having children, such as getting happiness, being able to help take care of the household and help the family economy in the future. However, it is not worth the cost to be incurred by women. The cost is not only child care cost, but also the cost lost due to child care (opportunity cost). Women lost much of their time off, lost opportunities to socialize and lost the opportunity to work. In the previous, it has also been mentioned that parents happiness due to the presence of children is due to altruism in parents. Altruistic parents prioritize quality than the number of children [9], so these parents will be happier when they have a small amount of children.

Children sex composition may also affect the level of one's happiness [14]. In this study, children's sex composition has a significant effect on men's happiness. Men who have children with incomplete sex compositions are more likely to be happy 1.3720 times than not having children. Men who have children with a complete sex composition were also more likely to be happy 1.4429 times than those who don't have children. After added with control variables, men who have child either incomplete or complete sex composition are more likely to be happy than those without children. In other words, men who have children are more likely to be happy than those who have no children, and there are no children sex preference for men. In societies where being parents are more valuable, men would gain greater happiness when they become fathers [11]. Moreover, having a child can carry on a family name and can be used as a social comparison in the community.

Children sex composition has different effects on women. The number of children and children sex composition variable jointly shows that children sex composition had a significant positive effect on women's happiness at a happy level. In other words, women who have children with either incomplete or complete sex are more likely to be happy than those who have no children. The addition of control variables gives different effects. Women who have children with a complete sex composition are more likely to be happy 1.3010 times. There is no significant effect on women happiness when women have children with incomplete sex composition. Women happiness affected by children with complete sex due to differences in the role pinned on son and daughter. Son can help the family economy, while daughter helps the domestic work [15]. So that parents will get long-term benefits of happiness when having children with complete sex [16]. Although both men and women have similar orientations toward children, there are significant differences in the sexual preference of children [17]. Expectations on economic assistance from children are higher in women due to the high economic dependence of women and a longer life expectancy of women than men.

Other findings from this study state that the impact of age on happiness follows a non-linear function. The results of the inferential analysis show that age and age squared have a significant effect on men happiness at happy levels and follow U-shape patterns, both in men and women. Various studies said that the effect of age and happiness follows a U-shape [18]. The men happiness is at the lowest point at age 55 years old. The pattern of happiness by age

can be explained through the life course; mental stress tends to be maximum at that age [19]. Although the results of age and age squared regression indicate a non-linear relationship between age and women happiness, the plot of margin adjusted prediction of age and women happiness shows the relationship approaching linear. The higher age of women, the lower of women happiness. This is presumably because of women's health status. The older the age of woman, the worse their health level. Although women have a longer life expectancy than men but their health condition is no better. Women in Indonesia experienced limited mobility functionality than men, either low, medium or high limited mobility [20].

The inferential model points out that there is a significant positive effect between education and happiness. The higher the level of education, the higher the happiness level, both among men and women. Those with higher education have greater chances of getting a job and a greater wage than a low educated person [18]. The residence has a positive and significant impact on either men or women happiness, although there is no significant impact for men on a somewhat happy level. People living in urban areas are more likely to be happy than those who live in rural areas. A person living in an urban area has easy access to education, health, entertainment and so on, rather than living in rural areas [21]. Economic wellbeing also shows a positive and significant effect on both men and women happiness, both for happy and somewhat happy levels. Those with higher economic wellbeing have higher happiness. Those with high economic wellbeing feels that they have met their needs; happiness is the fulfillment of human needs [22].

Health is an important factor that affects one's happiness. The data shows that those who are healthy are more likely to be happy, both among men and women. Health can affect one's happiness through the individual burden of health costs [23]. His research in Thailand showed no significant effect of health status on happiness; it was due to good health insurance in Thailand which resulted in people not burdened with health costs when ill. Even though Indonesia has already a national health insurance scheme, but not all the population has been covered. This causes the health costs to be spent on curative health services must be borne those who are sick, and sickness will lower happiness. Marital status has a significant effect on women happiness. This study shows that women who are married are more likely to be happy than a widower. Getting married provides togetherness, away from solitude and will complement each other [24]. Working women are less likely to be happy 0,8509 times compared to not working women. Working women experience work-family conflict that can reduce happiness [25].

#### **4. Conclusion**

Those with more children will have a lower level of happiness, both among men and women. Nevertheless, a person who has children is more likely to be happy than those who have no children. And furthermore, men are happy whatever their children's sex is. This doesn't occur among women; women are happier when they have both son and daughters. But both women and men with no children are the saddest couples among couples. This study showed that men's happiness is also affected by age, education, residence, economic wellbeing, and health status. Women's happiness is affected by age, marital status, working status, education, residence, economic wellbeing, and health status.

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