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## The Pursuit of Happiness: Predicting happiness based on anchor theory

Hanif Akhtar<sup>1</sup>, Ari Firmanto<sup>2</sup>

Faculty of Psychology, University of Muhammadiyah Malang<sup>1,2</sup>  
[hanifakhtar@umm.ac.id](mailto:hanifakhtar@umm.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>, [ari\\_f@umm.ac.id](mailto:ari_f@umm.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

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**Abstract.** *Happiness has been proven to bring many positive impacts on human life. One theory from the perspective of Islamic Psychology that explains how individuals achieve authentic happiness is the Anchor theory. There are four kinds of individual's Anchor, that is virtues, self, others and materials. The organization of these anchors determines happiness. This study aims to verify whether Anchor theory is able to predict individual happiness. Subjects in this study were 201 students with an age range of 18-20 years. Happiness is measured by two scales namely Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE), while Anchor structure is measured by Anchor Personality Inventory. Regression analysis is used to investigate whether the Anchor structure is able to predict happiness. The results of a single regression analysis showed that Anchor stability was not able to be a predictor of life satisfaction ( $F = 0.37$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ) and affective balance ( $F = 2.83$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). However, the results of multiple regression analysis showed that materials, self, others, and virtues simultaneously act as predictors of life satisfaction ( $F = 3.06$ ;  $R^2 = 0.059$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and affective balance ( $F = 7.84$ ;  $R^2 = 0.138$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Anchor virtues are the most powerful predictors of life satisfaction and affective balance. The implications and suggestions for efforts to increase individual happiness will be discussed in this article.*

**Keywords:** *anchor theory; happiness; islamic psychology; subjective well-being*

### INTRODUCTION

Living happily is the ideal of every individual. Philosophers have long written about happiness. In addition, popular books that provide guidelines for a happy life are also widely available in bookstores. Even though the ideas presented are interesting and seem plausible, what is written is mostly not based on scientific study with strict methods. Scientific studies of happiness itself only developed rapidly starting in the 2000s (Diener, Lucas, et al., 2018). Diener (2000) states that happiness is a term often used by ordinary people. Even so, this term that has many meanings and too broad definitions will make it difficult for scientists who want to research about happiness. Therefore, Diener proposes to use the term subjective well-being as a substitute for the term happiness. Subjective well-being is a general term to refer to various types of subjective evaluations of a person's life, including cognitive evaluations and affective feelings (Diener, 2009). Subjective well-being has three dimensions, namely positive affection and negative affection in the affective domain, and life satisfaction in the cognitive domain. Therefore, the term happiness in this

study will refer to the subjective well-being construct proposed by (Diener, 2009).

There are many reasons why the study of happiness develops rapidly, one of which is the impact of happiness on the individual. From a review of several literature, happy people tend to be healthier and have a longer life (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012; Diener & Chan, 2011), participate more in the community, are preferred by others, are less divorced, and have better job performance (Diener, Oishi, et al., 2018; Staw et al., 1994). Even some countries have used several psychological aspects, such as happiness as an indicator of national success (Oishi et al., 2013). Therefore, identifying what factors can increase happiness is an important thing for researchers to do.

Several scientists have researched a lot about happiness and what factors influence it. From the systematic review conducted by (Diener, Oishi, et al., 2018) social relations, income, religion, and demographic factors are variables that can predict happiness. Myers (2000) confirms this by saying that positive relationships with other people, adequate income, and belief in religion are factors that support the creation of happiness. Married people are happier than unmarried people, people on higher incomes are happier than people on lower incomes, people who embrace and believe in religion are happier than atheists. Several demographic variables are also empirically related to happiness, such as gender, education level, and age (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008; Michalos, 2008; Zuckerman et al., 2017).

Religion has been identified as one of the factors that can increase happiness (Francis et al., 2004; Sillick et al., 2016; Tay et al., 2014). The results of a systematic study of the study of happiness and religiosity also show that Muslims are more religious and happier than people of faith from other religions (Rizvi & Hossain, 2017). From the perspective of Islamic psychology, there is one theory that explains how individuals achieve authentic happiness, namely the Anchor theory which was first introduced by Riyono & Himam (2011). This theory explains that happiness or despair is determined by how individuals choose and organize their anchors (Riyono et al., 2012).

Even though Anchor is a new theory in psychology, the Anchor concept itself has existed in psychological studies. Riyono & Himam (2011) explain that based on this theory, the dynamics in humans in principle have a paradox between dynamic freedom and the tendency to achieve stability. The paradox between freedom and stability occurs because behind human freedom there is another side, namely the dynamics of risk, uncertainty, and hope (R.U.H) related to a future that is still a mystery. In facing the future, humans are weak creatures, and to compensate individuals try to find a handle / anchor in order to achieve certainty or stability.

An anchor is something or someone that is relied on or used as a guide in dealing with future uncertainty, avoids risks, and fosters hope (Riyono et al., 2012). Anchor can be in the form of virtues, self, others, and materials which is the most concrete anchor layer. For those who believe in God, virtues themselves are attached to God. The highest anchor is God as "the ultimate Anchor". However, God is still abstract and can only be reached by humans through His divine attributes, which are known as Virtues. Anchor can be described into layers, namely: 1) God (i.e, the ultimate Anchor); 2) Virtues (i.e, noble principles or noble values; 3) Self (i.e, all the qualities that are used as a mainstay; 4) Others (i.e, other people outside of oneself who help the problem solving; 5) Materials (i.e, valuable objects or money that are used as a mainstay for solving problems.

Furthermore, Riyono et al. (2012) explain that there are two models proposed to predict happiness based on the anchor structure. The first model is a prediction of happiness based on Anchor stability. Individuals who have stable anchor are individuals who rely on virtues as their main grip, have a balance between self and others, and minimize grip on materials. This stable individual is called an individual who achieves authentic happiness. In mathematical equation, the

stability of Anchor can be calculated by the formula for stability of anchor = (virtues - material) - (self - others). Even so, the Anchor structure is multidimensional, so the height of each person's Anchor type can affect their happiness. Therefore, the second model is the prediction of each Anchor structure towards happiness.

Although the Anchor theory is built from the cultural context of Indonesian society and through a scientific approach with a rigorous method, this theory has not been widely verified. Not many Indonesian or foreign researchers have researched the psychology construct based on Anchor's personality theory. The existing research also mostly uses a qualitative approach, so that its generalizability is low (Permadi & Faturochman, 2015; Sahama et al., 2019). Even though empirical verification is important to do to see whether the theory is able to explain the existing phenomena well. Therefore, this study is one of the first studies that wish to empirically verify the Anchor theory that has been built quantitatively.

This study aims to verify whether individual anchor stability is able to predict individual happiness. More specifically, this study also wants to see what anchor structure can best predict happiness. This research provides both practical and theoretical benefits. From a practical side, this research can be taken into consideration for individuals to increase their happiness by looking at the anchor they have. From a theoretical point of view, this study aims to empirically verify Anchor's theory, which has rarely been carried out with a quantitative approach.

## METHOD

The subjects in this study were 201 people. Convenience sampling technique was used to gather the data by using online questionnaires to undergraduate students in Malang. Subjects filled out voluntarily and received no compensation afterwards. Total male subjects were 87 people (43.28%), while female subjects were 114 people (56.72%). The participants were between 18 and 20 years old, with a mean = 18.53 and SD = 0.66. All participants were Muslim and single. The majority of the participants came from Javanese ethnicity (63.2%) and the rest were from other tribes (36.8%).

There are three instruments used in this study. The first is the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener & Chan, 2011) which is used to measure the cognitive aspects of happiness, namely life satisfaction. SWLS has been translated and validated into Indonesian by Akhtar (2019) and the reliability of the scale is satisfactory, it has Alpha reliability of 0.828.

The second instrument used is the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) (Diener et al., 2010) which is used to measure the affective aspects of happiness, namely positive affection and negative affection. SPANE has been translated by Hanif Akhtar (in <https://eddiener.com/scales/8>) and has satisfactory reliability, with  $\alpha = 0.790$  for positive affection and  $\alpha = 0.815$  for negative affection.

The third instrument used is the Anchor Personality Inventory (Riyono & Himam, 2011) which is used to measure the individual anchor structure. The Anchor Personality Inventory has been validated by Pratiwi & Riyono (2017) and from the results each Anchor dimension has the following reliability coefficient values: 1) materials of 0.846; 2) self of 0.739; 3) others equal to 0.816; and 4) virtues of 0.861. Thus, these instruments are suitable for use in this study.

This study uses a survey method. Data were collected through classical administration in the classroom. All participants were given an explanation of the purpose of the study before they completed the three instruments. Participants who were willing to participate in the study completed the SWLS, SPANE, and API scales. It took about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Data analysis was carried out to determine the role of Anchor stability on happiness which was carried out using simple linear regression analysis techniques. Meanwhile, the analysis to determine the role of all Anchor dimensions on happiness was carried out using multiple linear analysis techniques. This study also wanted to conduct additional analyzes to explore happiness in terms of gender. The analysis technique used was the independent sample t-test. All analytical procedures were carried out with the help of JASP software.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive data of participants in each research variable in terms of gender can be seen in table 1. Table 1 shows that the Anchor Virtue was the type of anchor most often used by the participants, both male and female. While the type of Anchor that the participants uses the least was the Anchor Material. The t value was the result of the independent sample t-test on each variable. From the results of the t test, it is known that there was no significant difference between material, self, other, virtue, affection balance, life satisfaction, and anchor stability between men and women ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 1.  
Descriptive data of research variables for men and women

Variable	Men			Women			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
Material	87	33.2	6.12	114	32.5	5.49	0.8	0.42
Self	87	35.2	5.97	114	35.4	5.36	-0.22	0.83
Other	87	34.3	5.85	114	34.2	5.11	0.14	0.89
Virtue	87	41.7	5.84	114	42.9	5.35	-1.57	0.12
Life satisfaction	87	20.7	5.09	114	20.9	5.05	-0.23	0.81
Affection Balance	87	6.54	6.93	114	6.13	5.85	0.45	0.65
Anchor Stability	87	3.66	7.75	114	5.71	8.5	-1.76	0.08

Regression analysis was carried out on the two proposed hypothetical models. The first model was a single regression analysis of anchor stability as a predictor of life satisfaction and affection balance. The results of the single regression analysis showed that Anchor stability was not a predictor of life satisfaction with a value of  $F(1,199) = 0.37$ ;  $b = 0.043$ ; and  $p > 0.05$ . Anchor stability was also not a predictor of affection balance with  $F(1,199) = 2.83$ ;  $b = 0.118$ ; and  $p > 0.05$ . Thus, the hypothesis in model one is rejected.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the two-model hypothesis, namely material, self, other, and virtue as predictors of life satisfaction and affection balance. The results of the first analysis showed that material, self, other, and virtue simultaneously acted as predictors of life satisfaction with a value of  $F(4,196) = 3.06$  and  $p < 0.05$ . The variation in life satisfaction that can be explained by the four predictors was 5.6% ( $R^2 = 0.059$ ). Meanwhile, the analysis of each predictor showed that only the virtue variable had a significant effect ( $b = 0.206$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Meanwhile, the second analysis showed that material, self, other, and virtue simultaneously acted as predictors of affection balance with a value of  $F(4,196) = 7.84$  and  $p < 0.01$ . The variation in the balance of affection that can be explained by the four predictors was 13.8% ( $R^2 = 0.138$ ). Meanwhile, the analysis of each predictor showed that only virtue ( $b = 0.367$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and other ( $b = -0.269$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) variables had a significant effect on the balance of affection. The complete

results of the regression analysis can be seen in table 2.

Table 2.  
 Anchor regression analysis on life satisfaction and affection balance

Dependent variable	Predictors	B	SEB	B	t	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Life satisfaction	Anchor stability	0,026	0,044	0,043	0,069	0,370	0,002
Affection balance	Anchor stability	0,091	0,054	0,118	1,683	2,83	0,014
Life satisfaction	Material	-0.055	0.082	-0.063	-0.671	3,064*	0,059
	Self	0.149	0.084	0.165	1.768		
	Other	-0.049	0.073	-0.053	-0.671		
	Virtue	0.186	0.068	0.206	2.745**		
Affection balance	Material	0.016	0.099	0.015	0.162	7,847**	0,138
	Self	-0.071	0.101	-0.063	-0.701		
	Other	-0.313	0.088	-0.269	-3.559*		
	Virtue	0.415	0.081	0.367	5.111**		

\* $p < 0,05$ ; \*\* $p < 0,01$

This study aims to predict happiness based on the Anchor theory. The term happiness in this study refers to the subjective well-being construct proposed by Diener (2009) which consists of life satisfaction and a balance of positive-negative affections. There are two models tested from this study. The first model that states Anchor's stability can affect happiness is not proven. This is contrary to the postulate of Anchor theory which states that the stability of Anchor affects the mental health of an individual, including happiness (Riyono et al., 2012).

This finding also strengthens Pratiwi & Riyono (2017) who also found that Anchor stability had no effect on employee turnover intentions. These two findings have implications for the need to revisit the operational formula for Anchor stability as a mathematical formula. This is also reinforced by the absence of empirical evidence in the formulation of a mathematical formula for Anchor stability. Riyono et al. (2012) state that Anchor stability is the key to individual psychological stability. A stable anchor can only be achieved if the individual is no longer dependent on things related to humans, but depends on God. Anchor stability is a complex mental process and simplification of Anchor stability by mathematical calculations should be avoided.

The second model of this study is to investigate whether these four anchors can predict life satisfaction (cognitive aspects of happiness) and affective balance (affective aspects of happiness). The first analysis showed that the four types of anchor had a significant effect on life satisfaction. However, in the analysis of each predictor, only the Anchor Virtue played a significant role. This is in accordance with the Anchor theory explained by Riyono et al. (2012), namely that individuals who focus on Anchor Virtues, which are the manifestations of God's values, will create meaning and protect themselves psychologically.

The findings in the second analysis also corroborate the findings in the first analysis. In the predictor role analysis, Anchor virtues have a significant effect on affection balance. This is in accordance with the statement from Riyono et al. (2012) that belief in God which is manifested in the Anchor Virtues will create a feeling of peace. However, the second analysis also found a unique finding, namely that Anchor others also had a significant effect on the balance of affection but in a negative direction. This means that individuals who rely on anchor others tend to have a low balance of affection.

If associated with the cultural context, the Indonesian state based on Hofstede (2011) can be grouped into collectivist culture. Collectivist culture has the characteristics of individuals having interdependent self and the demand to pay attention to the feelings of others is very important. This also affects the way individuals interpret their happiness which cannot be separated from collective happiness (Kitayama et al., 2000). This explanation makes the findings of this study plausible because individuals who have Anchor others will always try to meet endless social demands, resulting in an unstable psychological condition.

The findings of this study corroborate several previous findings in the field of Psychology of Religion which found that someone who believes in a religion tends to be happier (Francis et al., 2004; Sillick et al., 2016; Tay et al., 2014). There is an overlap between the concept of religiosity and Anchor Virtues, namely the belief in the values of goodness from God. This belief gives people a sense of meaning in life, a sense of well-being or comfort, and a sense of security in facing problems. The findings of this study have implications for efforts to increase one's happiness. To increase individual happiness, it is necessary to provide reinforcement in his belief in God and all His goodness, thus individuals will make Anchor Virtues as the main anchor.

This study still has several limitations. The first limitation relates to sample variation. The sample of this research is limited to Muslim students in the city of Malang without considering the mahzab adopted or the status of whether the student is a non-native or native of Malang. This information is important because the values adopted and the culture of origin can affect a person's anchor structure. In addition, this Anchor concept is something new and still not widely used in previous empirical research, so the application and invariance of this construct still needs to be explored. Information regarding the application of this theory to the characteristics of samples of different ages, religions and cultures is not available, even though individual beliefs are closely related to these three variables. To see the broader invariance of the Anchor construct, further research is expected to increase the sample variation in terms of age, culture, and different religions. This research also only focuses on individuals who believe in God, even though the individual Anchor concept can be different for people who do not believe in God. Therefore, it is necessary to also examine the concept of Anchor which is owned by Atheists and its relation to individual psychological conditions.

## CONCLUSION

Anchor stability as a mathematical formula for Anchor Virtues minus Anchor Materials minus the absolute difference between Anchor self and others does not play a role in determining one's happiness. However, the analysis of the four types of anchor showed that certain types of anchor had an effect on life satisfaction and affection balance. Anchor virtues were the strongest predictors of life satisfaction and affective balance. The higher the Anchor virtues a person has, the higher their life satisfaction and affective balance. Meanwhile, other anchor was inversely proportional to the balance of affection.

This research provides suggestions for efforts to increase one's happiness. To increase individual happiness, it is necessary to provide reinforcement in his belief in God and all His goodness, so that it will strengthen his Anchor Virtues. Other researchers are suggested to carry out further verification of this Anchor theory by increasing the sample variation in terms of age, culture, and different religions. Thus, the findings can be generalized more broadly to various subject characters.

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