

# Adaptation and psychometric properties of the Indonesian version of the fear of happiness scale

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## Abstract

According to a survey on cultural beliefs, some believe happiness should be explicitly avoided when excessive. The Belief is called Fear of Happiness, which has negative consequences. Therefore, this research aimed to adapt the unidimensional measurement tool, the Fear of Happiness Scale, developed by Joshanloo (2013), into the Indonesian language. The adaptation process followed the guidelines outlined by the International Testing Commission (ITC) in "Guidelines for Translating and Adapting Tests". Based on the pilot research conducted on 1652 Indonesian citizens of different ages and cultural backgrounds, the data analysis results indicated that the measurement tool met the criteria for reliability ( $\alpha = 0.832$ ) and test-retest reliability, assessed using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient. The tool demonstrated validity, with content, construct, and validity scores of 0.98 and 0.896, as well as factor validity scores of CFI 1.00, TLI 1.03, RMSEA 0.00, and SRMR 0.001. Therefore, the adapted Fear of Happiness Scale could assess the fear of happiness phenomenon within Indonesian society.

## Keywords

Fear of happiness, happiness, scale adaptation

## Introduction

Happiness is an important aspect of human life universally desired and pursued (Eid & Diener, 2001). However, research indicates that the perceptions can differ greatly across cultures (Joshanloo, 2013). According to a survey on cultural beliefs, certain individuals believe excessive happiness should be avoided. This stems from the notion that an abundance of the perception can potentially result in negative consequences.

Different theoretical findings show that some individuals may have negative attitudes toward happiness and develop fear (Fear of Happiness) (Joshanloo et al., 2014). The concept refers to the belief that happiness may have negative consequences (Joshanloo, 2013). People possess different reasons to support their fear of happiness. The belief regarding excessive happiness may be rooted in the notion that happiness increases vulnerability to disasters, invites competition, or provokes jealousy (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

Fear of Happiness is characterized as a relatively stable belief, where experiencing different positive emotions may negatively affect an individual's well-being (Joshanloo, 2013, 2019). To prevent potential unpleasant consequences, individuals tend to suppress authentic feelings, diminish the experience of positive influences, or avoid any actions associated with success, excessive joy, and happiness (Joshanloo, 2013, 2014).

There are findings from clinical samples that provide evidence for reinforcing factors that contribute to an individual's increasing fear of experiencing happiness, namely the presence of mental health issues (Gilbert et al., 2012). These findings indicate that individuals with mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and stress do not

automatically embrace positive emotions such as happiness and joy. These positive emotions may be perceived as threats, and past experiences with positive feelings can lead to unfavourable consequences. Therefore, individuals may be reluctant to embrace happiness because they believe feeling happy can make them less vigilant or bring negative outcomes. Research has also found a close association between the fear of happiness and psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as a negative correlation with positive emotions (Gilbert et al., 2012).

Several research indicates that culture also influences individuals' attitudes toward positive experiences. This is consistent with research findings stating that emotional regulation and experiences are shaped by the active role of the culture (Miyamoto & Ma, 2011). Furthermore, this is evidenced by experimental findings, where Asians perceive Americans as more prone to enjoying positive emotions. Another supporting finding suggests that Asians report a lower capacity to savour positive experiences (Lindberg, 2004). In cross-cultural comparisons, it has been observed that Asians are often perceived as placing a greater emphasis on finding meaning and purpose in life rather than solely pursuing pleasure or indulging in negative emotions, in contrast to Americans.

In the context of happiness, individuals need to be aware of certain limitations as its expression can have negative

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implications. For instance, in Japan, previous research has highlighted that happiness is perceived as potentially dangerous and should be limited to prevent future suffering (Uchida & Kitayama, 2009). This concept is also in Chinese culture, with the proverb "Extreme happiness begets tragedy" (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). From an Islamic perspective, worldly happiness is often viewed as a distant and temporary state, with a greater emphasis placed on spiritual contentment and closeness to God (Joshano, 2013). In Ifaluk culture, happiness is actively avoided as it is seen as overly individualistic and contrary to the communal values and norms of society (Selin & Davey, 2012). There are also popular Iranian sayings such as "Crying will come after laughing" and "We laugh a lot, so we will encounter danger" (Moshiri Tafreshi, 2009). Even though individuals need to express and experience happiness, based on certain cultures, there is a need for limitations to prevent excessiveness.

In Indonesia, various cultural beliefs share similar notions. Preliminary research showed that in Javanese culture, there is a phrase "ojo nguyu nemen-nemen, mengko nangise nemen pisan," meaning a cautionary reminder not to laugh or have excessive fun. Several informants from different cultures (Sangir, Sunda, Minang, Malay, Palembang, and Chinese) also agreed that they often hear similar phrases with the same meaning, but are unsure of the exact origin. This explains the expression of emotions in various diverse cultural backgrounds. For Indonesians, emotions, such as happiness and sadness, are also perceived as negative and should be well-controlled to avoid affecting relationships with others and maintain harmony (Prawitasari, 1993; Kurniawan & Hasanat, 2007).

Indonesia, a nation with strong religious values, encompasses many beliefs associated with happiness. Within Islam, a discerning perspective is upheld towards excessive laughter, believed to desensitize the heart. Additionally, a concept known as the evil eye, referred to as "Ain," prevails, signifying that happiness has the potential to elicit envy and result in unfortunate circumstances (Al-Albani, 2007; Sari et al., 2021). Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism also share a similar perspective, where excessive or attachment to material happiness can lead to imbalance, vanity, or suffering (Azisi, 2021; Ricard, 2011; Vaswani & Sobarna, 2009).

The prevailing perception of happiness within religious and culturally diverse countries, including Indonesia, is often intertwined with notions of sin, shallowness, and moral degradation. This understanding, coupled with the belief in the potential negative repercussions of happiness, has resulted in a fear of happiness. Despite the multifaceted factors influencing the presence of this fear, there is limited research dedicated to examining and formulating measurement instruments on this concept (Joshano, 2013).

In 2013, Joshano developed a measurement tool to examine the concept of fear of happiness by constructing a self-report scale known as the Fear of Happiness Scale (FHS). The development involved multiple cultures in 14 countries, including Europe, Asia, Russia, and Africa, and was translated into 7 languages (Joshano, 2014). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed that the model fit was excellent across all cultures. The scale also showed good reliability, with the FHS yielding alphas ranging from 0.70 to 0.87, an acceptable internal consistency range. In addition to the

**Table 1.** Participants' Gender and Occupation

Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Male	309	18.7
Female	1343	81.3
Occupation		
Student	970	58.7
Employers	434	26.3
Entrepreneur	61	3.7
Homemaker	92	5.6
Others	95	5.7

scale developed by Joshano, a similar scale measures fear of happiness developed by Gilbert et al. (2012). However, this scale not only focuses on the fear of happiness but also involves the fear of affection and has not been widely tested in various countries.

Furthermore, previous research has provided evidence that fear of happiness is negatively predicted by happiness. Individuals who do not experience a fear of happiness tend to exhibit higher positive affect and happiness, lower negative affect and depression, than individuals who feel the fear of happiness (Blasco-Belled et al., 2020). These findings align with Joshano (2014) in conjunction with the World Happiness Report (2021), where countries exhibiting low fear of happiness tend to possess higher happiness indices. New Zealand, characterized by low fear of happiness, stands at the 9th position on the Happiness Index. In contrast, India, with a high fear of happiness score, is placed at the 136th spot on the same index. Comparing Indonesia to other ASEAN countries, the World Happiness Report (2021) reported that Indonesia's ranking is lower than Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore, all of which occupy the top positions in ASEAN, with an undisclosed fear of happiness score.

The different understandings of fear of happiness in each culture and the assumptions regarding its correlation with the indexes of each country require further understanding. It is difficult to find data on the fear of happiness in Indonesian society due to the lack of adequate measurement tools. Therefore, this research is conducted to adapt the fear of happiness scale for use in Indonesia.

## Method

### Participants

The research was conducted using a non-probability technique, specifically convenience sampling, referring to specific characteristics of Indonesian citizens residing and living in the country and at least 18 years old. Due to the variation in happiness paradoxes across different age groups, the limit was set based on Stone, et al. (2010), which specified a minimum age of 18 to ensure adequate results. The distribution of the questionnaire scale was carried out online by sharing it through Instagram social media. After distributing the questionnaire scale, 1678 participants were involved in the research. However, after adjusting for the required criteria, 26 participants were excluded, resulting in 1652 respondents.

## Research instrument

The instrument used was FHS to investigate the general belief that happiness can have detrimental consequences (Joshano, 2013). The scale was developed by conceptualizing the global concept of fear of happiness and identifying the psychological attachment to this concept of fear of happiness (Joshano, 2014). The FHS was a unidimensional self-report measurement tool comprising 5 statements describing the subject's fear of happiness. Responses were scored using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The minimum and maximum scores were 7 and 35, where higher scores indicated greater fear of happiness. Before its use, the FHS scale was adapted to Indonesian culture and language, following the guidelines of the International Test Commission (2016). The adaptation process involved the following stages:

**Pre-Condition** In this stage, communication was conducted through email, and permission was obtained from the test tool developer, Mohsen Joshano, to adapt the FHS to the Indonesian language. The original format was obtained from an article titled "The Influence of Fear of happiness beliefs on responses to the Satisfaction with life scale", published in the journal Personality and Individual Differences in 2013.

**Test Development** The second stage was translation using the Forward-Backward method to translate the FHS into Indonesian within the Indonesian cultural context. Two translators performed the forward translation. The criteria were individuals with adequate knowledge of (1) the involved language, (2) culture, (3) test content, and (4) general principles of testing. Similarly, the translation process was carried out independently. In the next stage, backward translation was performed by two translators living in English-speaking countries for more than two years, were proficient in English and Indonesian languages, and had backgrounds in Psychology or Non-Psychology. These two translators had no access to the original measurement tool used in the research.

**Synthesis** The third stage involved synthesizing the translation results through discussions. A complete translation was obtained based on the agreement among the translators, and this stage resulted in a draft translation of the fear of happiness scale in Indonesian.

**Review** The fourth stage involved reviewing the translation results, and the review was conducted to assess the equivalence of the translation by experts and peer reviewers. 1. Format The experts in this stage were psychologists with experience working with English-speaking individuals and having lived in English-speaking countries for at least two years. The peer reviewers were professional psychology master's students from the University of Padjajaran. 2. Procedure Firstly, the reviewers' consent was requested by providing informed consent, and a draft containing a brief explanation of the FHS measurement tool was provided with the translated items. It is important to note that each item in the research was assessed using a scale ranging from 1 to 5. A rating of 1 indicated that the item was not representative in any way, while 5 denoted that the item was highly representative of the analyzed concept.

**Table 2.** CVI Aiken's

Item	Rating			Aiken's
	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	V
Item 1	5	4	5	0.92
Item 2	5	5	5	1
Item 3	5	5	5	1
Item 4	5	5	5	1
Item 5	5	5	5	1
Total				0.98

**Table 3.** Fit Indices

Index	Value
Comparative fit index (CFI)	1.000
Tucker-lewis index (TLI)	1.003

**Table 4.** Other Fit Measures

Metric	Value
RMSEA	0.000
RMSEA 90% CI lower bound	0.000
RMSEA 90% CI upper bound	0.043
RMSEA p-value	0.097
SRMR	0.001

**Readability Test** The fifth stage involved conducting a readability test. After the statement items were organized into a scale, they were tested on 5 laypersons (non-psychologists) who met the sample criteria. This was done to assess whether the instructions and item content were understandable to the participants.

## Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis used various methods, including Aiken's Index to test content validity. The factor structure of the scale was examined using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Furthermore, the construct validity was assessed using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) method, and the reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's Alpha technique.

## Result

### Content Validity

In adapting the scale, Aiken's Content Validity Index was used to assess content validity. According to the result, index  $0 \leq V \leq 0.4$ ,  $0.4 < V \leq 0.8$ , and  $0.8 < V \leq 1$  indicated "not valid," "medium validity," and "very valid" (Aiken, 1980). Based on the calculations presented in Table 2, the content validity of the adapted FHS fell into the "very valid" category.

### Factorial Validity

This research employed Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and several indices were used to test the model fit for factorial validity (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Browne & Cudeck, 1992). For CFI and TLI in Table 3, values greater than 0.95 were considered very good. For RMSEA and SRMR in Table 4, values less than 0.05 were considered ideal, while those ranging from 0.06 to 0.08 were acceptable.

The calculations generally yielded CFI (1.00) and TLI (1.03), greater than 0.95, indicating an excellent fit. The

RMSEA (0.000) and SRMR (0.001) had values less than 0.05, indicating that the CFA conducted on the adapted Fear of Happiness Scale in the Indonesian language yielded ideal results.

### Construct Validity

Construct validity was assessed using Convergent validity, employing the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) method. According to [Carlson & Herdman \(2010\)](#), a convergent validity level of  $r = 0.85$  was considered high for assessing construct validity. Convergent validity above  $r = 0.70$  was recommended, while values below  $r = 0.50$  were avoided.

Based on Table 5, the ICC values were calculated using the Two Way Mixed-effects model, and the 95% confidence interval obtained an ICC value of 0.812 and 0.896 for single and average measures. Therefore, the construct and convergent validity of the adapted FHS were good and fell within the recommended values.

### Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

Using SPSS 26, Cronbach's Alpha technique was employed to assess reliability. Furthermore, reliability was considered acceptable when it approached 1 and was considered low at 0. Based on the calculation, an Alpha value of 0.832 was obtained, indicating high reliability.

### Test-Retest Reliability

Test-retest was conducted at an interval of 14 to 20 days from the first test ([Park et al., 2018](#)), and the number of participants in the retest was 530. The decrease occurred due to the difficulty of contacting all the subjects who participated in the initial test, which amounted to 1652. Considering the limitations and the lack of explicit sources mentioning the influence of changes in the number of subjects on the test-retest, the results were acceptable as long as they did not violate testing conditions. If these conditions are met, the test-retest can be used to estimate the consistency of test results over time ([DeVon et al., 2007](#)).

The test-retest measurement was conducted using the ICC method. An ICC value below 0.5, 0.5 - 0.75, 0.75 - 0.9, and greater than 0.90 indicated "poor," "moderate", "good", and "very good" reliability, respectively ([Koo & Li, 2016](#)). Additionally, the estimation obtained from reliability research was only an expected value of the actual ICC.

Based on calculations using the Two Way Mixed-effects model, ICC values of 0.907 and 0.951 were obtained for single and average measures. With the confidence interval, there was a 95% chance that the true ICC value was between 0.890 - 0.921 and 0.942 - 0.959 for single and average measures. Therefore, it was concluded that the reliability level of the adapted FHS was excellent.

## Discussion

This research focused on adapting the Fear of Happiness Scale into Indonesian, using the ITC Guidelines for Translating and Adapting Tests. The content validity of the FHS scale in the Indonesian version was found to be good, as indicated by the Content Validity Index Aiken's total score of  $V=0.983$ ,

meaning it was highly valid ([Aiken, 1980](#)). This showed that the Indonesian version of the FHS scale successfully encompasses important aspects of the fear of happiness concept and accurately measures the concept of fear of happiness.

The factorial validity of the scale was examined through CFA, which showed excellent results with CFA and TLI values  $> 0.95$  and RMSEA and SRMR values  $< 0.05$ . These results were consistent with previous research conducted by [Joshanloo \(2013\)](#) in Iran (CFI = 1.000, TLI = 1.000, RMSEA = .004), New Zealand (CFI = 1.000, TLI = 1.009, RMSEA = .000), Japan (CFI = 1.000, TLI = 1.005, RMSEA = .000), Singapore (CFI = .988, TLI = .975, RMSEA = .059), Malaysia (CFI = .998, TLI = .997, RMSEA = .020), and by [Bülbül \(2019\)](#) in Turkey (CFI = .099, RMSEA = .006, SRMR = .003).

[Joshanloo et al. \(2014\)](#) also tested the scale's construct across different cultures and found an excellent fit in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan, Kenya, and Pakistan. However, modification indices in New Zealand, Iran, India, Brazil, Russia, Taiwan, and Kuwait indicated that allowing freely estimated residual covariances significantly improved the fit. After determining the residual covariances, the baseline model yielded a very good fit. Similar to the results obtained in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, adapting FHS into the Indonesian language obtained an ICC value of 0.812 and 0.896 for single and average measures. These results indicate excellent construct and convergent validity in adapting FHS into the Indonesian language ([Carlson & Herdman, 2010](#)). In addition, the obtained ICC values showed a high level of agreement between the tested scale and the intended construct. This suggested that the adapted FHS was a recommended method for measuring variables related to happiness within the Indonesian cultural context.

The reliability of the Indonesian version of the FHS scale was also found to be high. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient and test-retest ICC results of the FHS scale in the Indonesian version showed consistency with the original form of the scale conducted by [Joshanloo \(2013\)](#) and supported various previous findings on the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of FHS in New Zealand ( $\alpha = .786$ ), Brazil ( $\alpha = .790$ ), Russia ( $\alpha = .773$ ), Pakistan ( $\alpha = .746$ ), Iran ( $\alpha = .879$ ), Kuwait ( $\alpha = .734$ ), Korea ( $\alpha = .848$ ), Japan ( $\alpha = .790$ ), Hong Kong ( $\alpha = .757$ ), Singapore ( $\alpha = .795$ ), Malaysia ( $\alpha = .791$ ), and other countries ([Joshanloo et al., 2014](#)).

Based on the elaboration, the findings of the Indonesian version of the Fear of Happiness Scale were reliable and valid. Therefore, the adapted FHS in the Indonesian language was ready for practitioners to measure the level of fear of happiness.

## Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, the Fear of Happiness Scale was developed to measure the general notion that experiencing happiness, particularly at excessive levels, may have some negative consequences, regardless of the actual negative outcomes. The statistical analysis confirmed that the adapted FHS scale showed ideal and reliable results in measuring variables related to the fear of happiness in the Indonesian sample.

**Table 5.** Convergent validity ICC

	Intraclass Correlation	95%Confidence Interval		F Test wit True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single measures	.812a	.572	.899	13.535	529	529	.000
Average measures	.896c	.727	.947	13.535	529	529	.000

The implementation of this research was designed to adapt to the prevailing pandemic conditions, resulting in limitations in the distribution to test the reliability and validity of the FHS scale. These limitations led to a dominance of the sample in terms of gender, ethnicity, and specific domicile. Future research should consider distribution schemes that facilitate a more equitable scale representation and provide a more comprehensive and accurate depiction of the sample.

The Fear of Happiness Scale was successfully adapted to measure the fear of happiness among the Indonesian population. The statistical analysis confirmed the reliability and validity of the adapted scale. However, due to the limitations imposed by the pandemic and the sample composition, further research should be carried out to ensure a more representative and inclusive sample for a comprehensive understanding of the fear of happiness in the Indonesian context.

## Declaration

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### Author contributions

AN: Conceptualization, data curation, writing – original draft preparation. ADK: Supervision, writing reviews and editing.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

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