

Happiness in the Javanese context: Exploring the role of emotion regulation and resilience

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ABSTRACT

Javanese, with their unique values, behaviors, and habits, represent the largest population among the many ethnicities in Indonesia. They adhere to specific values to maintain happiness in their lives, namely *narima* (acceptance) and *rila* (compliance). These values have psychological significance as they encompass resilience and the ability to regulate emotions. Furthermore, from a psychological perspective, resilience and emotion regulation play crucial roles in shaping the happiness of the Javanese population. Therefore, this study explores the relationship between emotion regulation, resilience, and happiness among the Javanese population. 250 Javanese from East Java and the Special Region of Yogyakarta were involved in this study. This study utilized the interdependent happiness, resilience, and emotion regulation scales. The findings showed a significant relationship between resilience, emotion regulation, and happiness among Javanese. Both independent variables accounted for 51.8% of the happiness experienced by the participants. Therefore, these findings shed light on the psychological processes and mechanisms underlying happiness among Javanese.

Introduction

As the literature defines, happiness is a multifaceted construct encompassing satisfaction on multiple levels, positive beliefs about life, and a greater experience of positive emotions than negative ones (Diener et al., 2013). It refers to an overall assessment of an individual's quality of life based on internal standards, such as life satisfaction and positive and negative emotions. People define happiness by subjective evaluation or liking of their life (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2014). However, most agreed that happiness is characterized by relative permanency, a predominately pleasurable emotion that ranges in value from simple satisfaction to profound joy in living and a natural desire for its continuation. Thus, happy individuals usually have pleasant feelings and are generally satisfied with their life (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2014).

Happiness manifests itself differently across different cultures. Individuals have unique paths to attain happiness in every cultural context, as personal value varies regarding what is considered good or bad (Uchida & Oishi, 2016). In Indonesia, its cultural diversity results in various perspectives on happiness. For example, the Toba Batak culture recognizes happiness associated with having numerous male offspring (Hutapea & Suleeman, 2018). Derived from Suryomentaraman's philosophy, happiness for Javanese is characterized as a state of peace, comfort, absence of conflict, freedom from unfulfilled desires, and liberation from attachments (Nashori et al., 2013). In Javanese culture, happiness is believed to be achieved

through the adherence to six principles known as the *sa* principles, namely *sabenere* (in accordance with reality), *sauntunge* (as necessary), *samestine* (as it should be), *sakpenak'e* (appropriately), and *saperlune* (as required). According to Javanese beliefs, it is believed that happiness resides within an individual who leads a balanced and mindful life (Muthia & Isbah, 2022). One famous Javanese proverb, *mangan ora mangan sing penting ngumpul*, highlights the importance of social interactions with loved ones, prioritizing social bonds over fulfilling basic needs such as eating. Similarly, in Sundanese culture, happiness is attained through living a virtuous life, avoiding excess, preserving nature, leading a calm and peaceful existence, attaining glory, peace, independence, and striving for perfection in the afterlife (Sumpena, 2012).

From the above description of cultural perspectives on happiness in Indonesia, it can be inferred that individuals derive happiness from cultivating positive relationships with those around them. This condition aligns with values in the collectivist culture, in which individuals are more likely to derive happiness from fitting into their environment and culture and having positive relationships than from autonomy and independence (Matsumoto & Juang, 2016) and fosters strong integration from birth, with individuals remaining loyal and caring for one another in their lives (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018). In this study, the participants were primarily Javanese, the largest ethnic group in Indonesia (Sahrah & Yuniasanti, 2020). Starting with the majority can benefit from understanding the concept of happiness in Indonesia.

Javanese culture is enriched with prominent values such as *narima* (acceptance), *sabar* (patience), *waspada-eling* (self-awareness), *andap asor* (humility), *prasaja* (down-to-earth) attitudes (Nashori et al., 2013). Furthermore, Javanese culture also incorporates teachings in the form of *piwulang*, specifically aimed at women, emphasizing attitudes of obedience, wholeheartedness, *narima* (respectfulness), and friendliness towards their husbands. Given these distinctive characteristics of Javanese culture, exploring the concept of happiness among the Javanese population becomes even more fascinating.

Three Javanese individuals were interviewed as a preliminary step in this study. One important finding that emerged was that various life changes require individuals to adapt to achieve happiness. Javanese individuals face challenges such as familial issues influenced by their cultural values, difficulties establishing relationships with others, and adjusting to environmental habits (Ruswahyuningsih & Afiatin, 2015). Developing resilience is crucial for confronting life's challenges (Hodges, 2017) as it is considered a self-defense mechanism that enables individuals to modify their responses in risky and critical situations at different stages of development (Infurna & Luthar, 2016).

Resilience is an individual's ability to rise from stressful situations and then adapt to challenging conditions, facing life's challenges positively (Pigaiani et al., 2020). In addition, resilience can be interpreted as a person's ability to adapt to change, adversity, illness, and hardship (Helton & Smith, 2004). Resilience is based on a person's ability to face, accept, and change the difficulties that have been and will be encountered at every stage of human development (Pigaiani et al., 2020). It can also improve and maintain an individual's quality of life. On the other hand, resilience is the ability to face challenges and bounce back after difficult experiences (Herrick et al., 2014).

Resilience can be seen as an essential aspect of supporting the stability of an individual's state of happiness in life (Infurna & Luthar, 2016). Seven resilience factors are self-efficacy, empathy, problem analysis skills, impulse control, optimism, and emotion regulation (Schueller et al., 2015). Someone resilient can control behavior, emotions, and attention when dealing with any issue.

In the Javanese concept, resilience is characterized by patience, *riila*, and *narima* (acceptance) (Ruswahyuningsih & Afiatin, 2015). Past research among Javanese adolescents found that personal abilities of adolescents influence the attitude and behavior of Javanese resilience (I am) in the form of cognitive skills, feelings of being loved and valuable, self-

confidence, steadfastness, problem-solving, and the ability to make good use of their resilience resources (I have) as social support, namely family, peers. In addition, external assets, including religious and environmental factors (neighbors), also enable them to have the ability (I can) to overcome stress, depression, bad experiences, and past trauma and rise to improve themselves with positive and independent strength (Ruswahyuningsih & Afiatin, 2015).

Happiness is also determined by individuals' ability to regulate their emotions. Emotion regulation enables individuals to use emotion regulation strategies to reduce the influence of negative emotions and generate positive emotions, particularly when facing challenges and difficulties. Past research found that those with high emotional regulation are likely to experience happiness (Chen et al., 2022). In the Javanese adolescent context, emotion regulation is believed to maintain harmony and serves as an attempt to avoid conflict (Adiyanti et al., 2020), which closely relates to happiness. Maintaining a good relationship with others entails working together, receiving and understanding each other, staying calm, and emphasizing unity. A harmonious attitude means avoiding conflict while maintaining relationships with others, thereby enabling quality relationships (Adiyanti et al., 2020).

According to previous studies, successful emotion regulation has several adaptive outcomes, including better psychological health and a higher level of well-being (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2014). It enables individuals to effectively harness their emotions, facilitating better coping and goal achievement (Wood et al., 2020). On the other hand, emotion regulation can have negative impacts, such as difficulty in solving problems as well as disruptions in social relationships and concentration (Prout et al., 2019). Emotion regulation involves managing and expressing feelings appropriately and can also be interpreted as a dynamic balance through attitudes and behaviors. It is an intrinsic part of emotional response, encompassing multifaceted attempts to influence emotions' nature, magnitude, and duration through heterogeneous actions (Wood et al., 2020). Effective and successful emotion regulation flexibly utilizes strategies targeting positive and negative emotions (Gross, 2013).

Limited studies examined the relationship between emotion regulation and happiness in the Javanese population. Previous studies primarily focused on the relationship between emotion regulation and subjective well-being. Emotion regulation is typically defined as how people influence their emotions, including what and when they feel and how emotions are experienced and expressed (Wood et al., 2020). It affects the dynamics, speed, and duration of emotional occurrences. Furthermore, it has an impact on behavior, experience, and physiology. Emotion regulation can reduce, strengthen, or maintain positive or negative emotions based on the individual's current goals (Gross, 2013).

Interestingly, emotion regulation and resilience are closely related because emotion regulation regulates psychological processes such as problem-solving and attention when a person reaches a resilient state (McGuirk et al., 2018). However, studies that examined these three variables, specifically in the Javanese context, have not been found. Previous studies revealed both resilience and emotion regulation were related to subjective well-being and were also closely associated with happiness (McGuirk et al., 2018). Therefore, it is hypothesized that there is a relationship between emotion regulation and resilience toward happiness in the Javanese population.

Method

Research Design

A quantitative method with a correlational design was applied in this study. Emotion regulation and resilience are predictors in this study, while happiness is the criterion.

Participants

This study was conducted on the Javanese population, and the inclusion criteria for participants were individuals of Javanese ethnicity, of any gender, and self-identified as having a Javanese ethnic background. Table 1 shows 250 early adulthood Javanese between 20-35 years (56% Female, $M_{age}=25$) participated in this study. Data were collected using convenience sampling by directly contacting participants and disseminating information through social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Line. Participants who expressed their willingness to participate were asked to complete an informed consent form and a questionnaire presented online through a Google Form.

Table 1
Participants' Demographic Data

	Category	Frequency	%
Sex	Male	110	44.0
	Female	140	56.0
Age	20-25	143	57.2
	26-30	58	23.2
	30-35	49	19.6
Region	East Java	130	52.0
	Special Region of Yogyakarta	120	48.0

Instruments

The Interdependent Happiness Scale (IHS) (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2014) was adapted for this study. The scale comprised nine items that were designed to assess the happiness of individuals who are relationally oriented, quiescent, and ordinary (e.g., "I believe that I and those around me are happy"), which were translated from English to Indonesian, then back-translated from Indonesian to English. Afterward, a pilot study was conducted, and items were then analyzed. The results obtained nine items with a total item correlation coefficient ranging from .351 to .547, ensuring that the scale had an Alpha coefficient of .881.

The second scale used in this study was a Resilience Scale (Vaishnavi et al., 2007) that was adapted and modified (Hermaleni, 2012). The scale consisted of 19 that assessed individuals' ability to adapt to new situations, be flexible, process changes, and have expectations. The scale's reliability with internal consistency showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of .931 with items correlation index range from .636 to .884. (Hermaleni, 2012).

The third was the adapted Emotion Regulation Scale (Gross, 2013). This scale included context selection, situation modification, changes in attention focus, cognitive changes, and response modulation. The reliability test of the scale showed an Alpha coefficient value of .733, indicating that the scale was regarded as reliable. Item analysis of the 20 statement items administered to 94 respondents produced 18 acceptable items, with a total item correlation range from .327 to .479. The item numbers of the test results were rearranged before being utilized in the actual study.

Data Analysis

Multiple regression was applied to analyze the data in this study. The stepwise method determined the predictors with the highest correlation with the dependent variable. This method identifies which resilience or emotion regulation correlates with happiness and determines each variable's significant contribution.

Results

The regression analysis results revealed that both resilience and emotion regulation accounted for 51.8% of the variation in happiness ($R = .713$, $R^2 = .518$, $F(2,243) = 102.898$; $p < .001$) (Table 2). The partial analysis showed that both resilience ($\beta = .620$; $p < .001$) and emotional regulation ($\beta = .383$; $p < .001$) significantly correlated with happiness. Specifically, resilience contributed 30.3%, and emotion regulation contributed 21.5% to happiness.

Table 2

Result of Multiple Regression

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficients Beta	F	t	p
	β	Standard Error				
Constant	.928	3.385		102.898	.243	<.001***
Resilience	.620	.043	.583		8.768	<.001***
Emotion Regulation	.383	.032	.344		4.248	<.001***

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Furthermore, each aspect of resilience and emotion regulation aspect was examined to determine its contribution to happiness. Table 3 shows the results of the multiple regression analysis on the resilience variable, revealing that only the aspect of having expectations has a significant impact on happiness ($R = .677$; $R^2 = .488$; $F(4,235) = 49.339$; $p < .001$).

Table 3

Result of Multiple Regressions Analysis: Aspects of Resilience on Happiness

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	p
	β	Standard Error			
Constant	2.464	4.382		.343	.732
Adapt to new situations	.718	.433	.173	1.878	.065
Flexible	-.083	.362	-.013	-.243	.882
Process of change	.465	.348	.122	1.240	.156
Have expectation	2.537	.329	.504	7.326	<.001***

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

The analysis of the emotion regulation variable showed that only the cognitive changes contributed significantly to happiness. Table 4 presents the results of multiple regression for each aspect of emotion regulation on happiness ($R = .530$; $R^2 = .344$; $F(2,235) = 44.589$; $p < .001$).

Table 4

Result of Multiple Regression of Aspect of Emotion Regulation toward Happiness

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	p
	β	Standard Error			
Constant	32.361	3.282		9.843	<.001***
Situation selection	.156	.172	.079	.962	.342
Situation modification	.013	.151	.043	.157	.455
Changes in attention focus	.335	.352	.011	.223	.235
Cognitive changes	1.021	.223	.446	4.531	<.001***
Response modulation	.454	.356	.214	.177	.366

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Discussion

The results showed emotion regulation and resilience significantly predict happiness among Javanese in early adulthood. Both resilience and emotion regulation were positively correlated to happiness. Moreover, resilience and emotion regulation simultaneously accounted for 51.8% of happiness among Javanese. These results support the proposed hypothesis, confirming a tested relationship between resilience, emotion regulation, and happiness. Therefore, the higher the resilience among the Javanese, the higher their happiness and vice versa. Also, the higher the emotion regulation among the Javanese, the higher their happiness and vice versa.

Every human has a way of finding happiness, depending on their culture (Compton & Hoffman, 2019). The conditions affecting a person's happiness were from individual and collective cultures (Diener et al., 2013). Moreover, the positive potential of happiness is influenced by culture (Schueller et al., 2015).

The current study showed that resilience and emotion regulation were personal sources contributing to individual happiness among Javanese. This finding is in line with a previous study that found that Javanese characteristics associated with resilience and emotional regulation, such as self-acceptance, positive social relationships, and ability to adapt to the environment, were related to happiness (Ruswahyuningsih & Afiatin, 2015).

This study also aligns with a previous finding that resilience and emotion regulation significantly predict happiness (Prout et al., 2019). Resilience plays a crucial role in fostering happiness within individuals, while emotion regulation facilitates positive emotional experiences and contributes to personal happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Dwiwardani et al., 2014). Individuals with effective emotion regulation skills tend to experience positive emotions daily (Adiyanti et al., 2020). Individuals who showed resilience and emotion regulation also exhibited social support, prosocial behavior, optimism, and happiness (Chopik et al., 2019). Consequently, these factors play a crucial role in promoting personal flourishing. Resilience and emotion regulation contribute to an individual's flourishing by fostering personal growth, positive relationships, and engagement with the broader community (Bono et al., 2019). Resilience and emotion regulation facilitate the experience of positive emotions, which, in turn, have a significant impact on social relationships. Social connections are considered a psychological aspect contributing to happiness (Taormina, 2015).

Moreover, resilience significantly contributed to the high happiness levels among the Javanese population. These results align with a previous finding that the Javanese community, a multicultural society, can experience happiness through resilience (Dwiwardani et al., 2014). The community exhibits greater resilience when faced with life problems, as they tend to reflect on them. A previous study also shows how Javanese actively undertake self-improvement activities in response to challenges. Javanese resilience was characterized by their ability to explore positive emotions and utilize their resilience resources (Ruswahyuningsih & Afiatin, 2015). Consequently, it can be understood that Javanese display resilience by reflecting on problems and perceiving the positive aspects. Individuals who exhibit resilience in the face of challenges tend to achieve complete happiness within themselves (Wiese et al., 2018).

Resilience among Javanese stems from individual efforts and social support rooted in their strong collectivist culture. Following the findings, a collaborative environment is instrumental in fostering happiness in the daily lives of Javanese. Javanese have a cultural value expressed by the phrase *mangan ora mangan sing penting ngumpul*, emphasizing the importance of coming together and sharing meals. As an implication for the Javanese community, it is crucial to establish a positive environment and foster mutual support through various activities that promote a sense of togetherness, thereby cultivating resilience in individuals. Social support and resilience play an equally significant role in fostering subjective well-being among individuals (Kong et al., 2021).

The results of this study showed that specific aspects of resilience, that is, having expectations, significantly predicted happiness. Having expectations refers to the condition where individuals navigate life's challenges with an optimistic outlook, maintaining hope for the future and believing in their aspirations (Dwiwardani et al., 2014). Expectations are essential for individuals as they fluctuate depending on the situation and circumstances. Those who are optimistic about life are more likely to experience happiness according to their perspective (Taormina, 2015).

The current study showed a relationship between aspects of emotion regulation, namely cognitive changes that predict the happiness of Javanese. Cognitive changes occur when individuals alter their judgments regarding the emotional significance of a situation, adapting their thinking about the circumstances. Javanese individuals with effective emotion regulation tend to feel lighter when dealing with problems and avoid excessive rumination, reflecting the concept of *rila* in Javanese culture. In line with the aforementioned arguments, when individuals can accept and willingly embrace situations that cannot be changed, they experience a sense of calmness and minimize the adverse effects they might otherwise experience.

These results align with a previous study; when Javanese experience stress or pressure from challenges, they tend to shift their thinking toward *narima ing pandum* (acceptance) to maintain their happiness (Ruswahyuningsih & Afiatin, 2015). This principle emphasizes the importance of accepting one's fate. *Narima* implies recognizing one's uniqueness and not feeling jealous of others, as Javanese believe that God has ordained the course of human life (Pradanta et al., 2015). This mindset prepares Javanese for any potential in life, enabling individuals to be better equipped. For different situations, facilitating adaptability and increased happiness (Wiese et al., 2018). The concept of *narima* is similar to the concept of gratitude. Gratitude encompasses emotion, cognitive activities, and attitudes (Ma et al., 2013). When individuals can express gratitude, it gives them a right to positive emotions, cognitive processes, and perspectives. Evaluating positive experiences increases the likelihood of positive evaluations and enhances happiness.

For future studies, it is important to investigate the role of resilience and emotion regulation in happiness within a larger population, considering more region-specific details. This study is particularly relevant given that Central Java and East Java have the largest Javanese populations, with Central Java alone accounting for approximately 34 million people (Sofianto, 2021). Each region exhibits different Javanese cultural characteristics, as seen in Central and East Java (Wijayanti & Nurwianti, 2010). However, this study did not delve into the depth of the role of cultural aspects in predicting happiness. Therefore, future studies are expected to explore the role of cultural appreciation in predicting happiness, potentially utilizing open questionnaires. This study did not consider external factors such as religiosity, despite Javanese being known for their strong sense of community and religious devotion (Budiasmoro, 2014).

Conclusion

Resilience and emotion regulation have a significant role in happiness in Javanese. Specifically, in the context of Javanese, this study framework confirmed that adapting to new situations, being flexible, embracing change, and having expectations should be accompanied by the role of cultural aspects. This condition will enable individuals to lead a positive life through situation selection, modification, changes in attention focus, cognitive changes, and response modulation. When examining the aspects of resilience individually, only the aspect of having expectations contributed to happiness. In relation to emotion regulation, only cognitive change contributed to happiness. Therefore, the Javanese are expected to develop

the aspects of having expectations and cognitive change, as these factors can contribute to their happiness.

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Declarations

Author contribution. TARY, as the single author, established the research topic, collected data, analyzed data samples, produced the report, and editing.

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