



Development of a Muslim student happiness model through student engagement, friendship quality and positive thinking: Moderators of religious orientation in Southeast Asia

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Abstract: Promoting student happiness has become a growing priority in educational psychology because of its role in adolescent well-being. This study aims to test a comprehensive model of student happiness by analyzing the role of student involvement, friendship quality, and positive thinking, with religious orientation as the moderating variable. A non-experimental quantitative design was used involving 1,217 Muslim junior high school students from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Data were collected using validated instruments and analyzed using partial least squares–structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.0. The results show that student engagement ($\beta = .254$; $t = 9.499$; $p < .001$), friendship quality ($\beta = .221$; $t = 7.136$; $p < .001$), and positive thinking ($\beta = .191$; $t = 6.738$; $p < .001$) significantly predicted student happiness. Religious orientation significantly moderated the relationships between positive thinking and happiness ($\beta = .094$; $t = 2.981$; $p = .002$) and between student engagement and happiness ($\beta = .104$; $t = 3.059$; $p = .001$), but not friendship quality ($\beta = .020$; $p = .293$). The model explained 38.7% of the variance in student happiness. The findings provide an alternative explanation for student happiness by integrating psychosocial and spiritual factors in Southeast Asian cross-cultural contexts. The results also offer practical implications for educators and policymakers in the design of holistic interventions that increase student engagement, foster quality friendships, promote positive thinking, and integrate religious values to support student well-being.

Keywords: friendship quality; happiness model; positive thinking; religious orientation; student engagement

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Introduction

The phenomenon of student happiness among Muslims in Southeast Asia is a crucial issue that demands serious attention. Robust evidence shows that mental health problems among university students in Southeast Asia are highly prevalent. A systematic review by Dessauvagie et al. (2022) reported that the median prevalence of depression was 29.4%, of anxiety 42.4%, and of suicidal ideation 7–8% among students in the region. Their findings indicate that Southeast Asian students, including Muslim-majority populations in Indonesia and Malaysia, face significant mental health challenges that directly affect their academic and social lives. World Health Organization (2019) also confirmed that suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among young people aged 15–29 worldwide. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Health reports highlight adolescent suicide cases as a growing concern, reflecting underlying stress, depression, and a lack of adequate well-being support (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021). Therefore, it is important to study this issue more deeply to develop an effective model of student happiness relevant to the socio-cultural context in Southeast Asia. This study will not only provide a better understanding of the relationship between religiosity and happiness but also offer practical solutions to improve student well-being.

Research on the development of models of Muslim student happiness in Southeast Asia identifies significant gaps that require attention. First, most previous studies tend to focus on religiosity as a single variable, without accounting for interactions with other factors, such as student engagement and friendship quality (Laub, 1999; Sahraian et al., 2013). Second, the studies are often cross-sectional, which limits their ability to capture dynamic changes in student happiness over time (Achour et al., 2017). Third, previous research has not examined the role of positive mindsets as a moderator of the relationship between religiosity

and happiness, even though this is an important aspect of mental well-being (Aziz et al., 2023; Ching et al., 2025). In addition, the unique cultural and social context in Southeast Asia, where collectivism and religiosity strongly influence daily life, is often overlooked, despite its profound influence on the happiness of Muslim students (Davis III & Kiang, 2016). Previous studies have also tended to be descriptive and lack practical recommendations that can be implemented in an educational environment. This methodological weakness underscores the need for a more integrative, contextually grounded approach to the study of Muslim student happiness. Therefore, more in-depth and integrative research is necessary to develop a more relevant and effective model of student happiness.

An evaluation of previous studies shows that research on Muslim student happiness in Southeast Asia has not fully addressed the complexity of the factors that influence this issue (Laub, 1999; Sahraian et al., 2013). Most studies focus solely on the role of religiosity, without exploring how student engagement and friendship quality can contribute to their happiness (Achour et al., 2017). In addition, previous research has often overlooked the importance of a positive mindset as a key moderator of the relationship between religiosity and happiness (Ching et al., 2025). These studies also pay less attention to contextual variability, such as cultural influences and differing social norms across Southeast Asian countries (Davis III & Kiang, 2016). The evaluation shows that a more integrative, multidimensional approach is needed to understand Muslim students' holistic happiness better (Masyhuri et al., 2020). Therefore, the focus of this study is to fill this void by developing a happiness model that considers student engagement, friendship quality, and positive mindsets, and to explore how religious orientation moderates these relationships. Through this integrative approach, the study is expected to make a significant contribution to

improving the well-being of Muslim students in Southeast Asia.

The hypothesis that student engagement, friendship quality, and positive mindsets together contribute significantly to the happiness of Muslim students in Southeast Asia is tested. The main argument is that the higher students' involvement in school and social activities, the better the quality of their friendships, and the more positive their mindset, the higher their happiness. In addition, the study also examines the role of religious orientation as a moderator that can strengthen the relationship between these factors and student happiness. A further hypothesis tested posits that students with a strong religious orientation will be better able to manage stress and pressure, thereby increasing their likelihood of greater happiness. Moreover, the variation in the impact of these factors across cultural and social environments in the three Southeast Asian countries is analyzed. Consequently, the study aims to build a model of student happiness that is not only comprehensive but also relevant to the regional context. The findings are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the factors that affect the happiness of Muslim students in the region.

The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

- H₁: Student engagement positively influences Muslim students' happiness.
- H₂: Friendship quality positively influences Muslim students' happiness.
- H₃: Positive thinking positively influences Muslim students' happiness.
- H₄: Religious orientation moderates these relationships, strengthening the effects of engagement, friendship quality, and positive thinking on happiness.

Methods

The study design is based on non-experimental research, that is, research that does not involve manipulating independent variables.

The study includes correlating multiple variables, measuring several variables, and performing statistical analyses among them (Jhangiani et al., 2015). Such an approach allows researchers to explore relationships among variables without manipulating or directly controlling independent variables. The study's target population was Muslim students attending junior high school in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, aged 12-15. A total of 1,217 students were selected as respondents. Hair et al. (2010) argue that the recommended minimum sample size should be at least five times the number of variables measured. However, a more appropriate sample size is 10 respondents per variable.

Procedures

Data collection in Indonesia and Malaysia was conducted online using the Google Forms platform, which enables researchers to easily collect data tailored to their research needs. Data collection in the Philippines was conducted offline through personal contact with respondents in class. To ensure their participation, they were required to sign or provide written consent before completing the measurement instrument. It is an important ethical procedure in human research to ensure that respondents understand the purpose of the research, their rights as participants, and the implications of their participation. Consequently, informed consent helps ensure the ethical integrity and legality of the research and protects their rights and safety (Pruzan, 2016).

Research Instruments

Authentic Happiness Scale (AHS)

This instrument was adapted from Paterson et al. (2005) with the authors' permission. Translation followed forward and backward translation procedures. Construct validity was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), with all standardized factor loadings exceeding the recommended threshold of .50, indicating adequate

convergent validity (Hair Jr et al., 2014). Detailed results of the factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and reliability indices are presented in Table 1. Reliability analysis showed good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha = .86.

Happiness was measured using a modified version of the Orientation to Happiness (OTH) scale (Peterson et al., 2005), adjusted to include indicators of the dimensions of life engagement, meaning, and pleasure, comprising 22 items. The items were developed based on the dimensions of positive relationships with others, full engagement, meaning in everyday life, realistic optimism, and resilience.

Friendship Quality Scale (FQS)

The instrument was adapted with the author's permission. The translation process followed forward and back translation procedures, with expert reviews, to ensure linguistic equivalence. Construct validity was assessed using CFA, with all standardized factor loadings exceeding .50, indicating adequate convergent validity (Hair Jr et al., 2014). The results of the factor loadings, AVE, and reliability indices are presented in Table 1. Reliability analysis showed excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.990). The scale was adapted from the Friendship Qualities Scale developed by Bukowski et al. (1994) consisting of 23 items measuring companionship, conflict, help/aid, security, and closeness.

Student Engagement Scale (SES)

The instrument was also adapted with the author's permission. Translation employed forward-back procedures to ensure linguistic equivalence. Construct validity was assessed using CFA, with all standardized factor loadings exceeding .50. The detailed results are presented in Table 1. Reliability analysis indicated good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .88). The Student Engagement Scale, adapted from Doğan

(2014), consisted of 30 items covering emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement.

Positive Thinking Scale (PTC)

The Positive Thinking Scale was adapted from Na'imah et al. (2023), with contextual adjustments. The translation process employed forward-back translation procedures to ensure linguistic equivalence. Construct validity was assessed using CFA, with all standardized factor loadings exceeding .50. The results are presented in Table 1. Reliability analysis indicated good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .82). The instrument consisted of 15 items measuring critical thinking, cognitive control, objective thinking, and positive assumptions (*husnudzan*) toward God and others.

Religious Orientation Scale (ROS)

The scale was adapted from Allport and Ross (1967). As above, the translation process followed forward-back translation procedures to ensure linguistic equivalence. The instrument consisted of 17 items measuring intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation. Construct validity was also assessed using CFA, with all standardized factor loadings exceeding .50, indicating adequate convergent validity. Internal consistency was high (Cronbach's alpha = .90).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the partial least squares (PLS) method and the SmartPLS 3.0 application. The structural equation modeling (SEM) approach is used to evaluate statistical models that include moderation effects, in which the relationship between the free and bound variables is analyzed through moderation variables. In the combined PLS-SEM approach, two measurement submodels are applied: the outer model and the structural model (Tong, 2013). The measurement model or *outer model* is used to test validity and reliability. The validity testing procedure assesses convergent validity and

discrimination validity. The validity of convergence was tested by looking at the outer loading values that exceeded .06 in the research construction indicators and AVE values greater than .50. One of the evaluations of the *outer model* in SEM-PLS is the reliability test, in which the reliability of the variable is considered good if the value of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability exceeds .70 (Hair Jr et al., 2014).

The structural model, or inner model, is used to predict or demonstrate the existence of causal relationships (cause-and-effect) between variables in the study by observing the values of R-squared, f-squared, Q-square, and t-values, and the significance of the path coefficient. Path coefficient assessment, which aims to determine the direction of relationships in a structural or inner model, is conducted through bootstrapping. The value is considered significant if the t-statistic produced is greater than 1.96, with a significance level of 5% (Hair Jr et al., 2014).

Results

Outer Model

The measurement model demonstrated adequate convergent validity and reliability across all constructs. All the indicators showed outer loading values above .60, while the AVE values exceeded the recommended threshold of .50,

indicating satisfactory convergent validity. In addition, all the constructs exhibited strong internal consistency, with composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha values above .70. Overall, these results confirm the robustness of the measurement model. The detailed results are presented in Table 1.

All the items from the five scales were declared valid, as their outer loading values exceeded .60. The AVE values were above the recommended threshold of .50, indicating adequate convergent validity. Furthermore, reliability was assessed using composite reliability (CR), with all values exceeding .70, confirming strong internal consistency (Hair Jr et al., 2014). Reliability was further confirmed as all CR and Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of .70. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results, presented in Table 2, indicate that all constructs were empirically distinct.

Based on the results of the discrimination validity test using the HTMT approach, it is demonstrated that all HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of .90, indicating adequate discriminant validity. It can therefore be concluded that the requirements for the validity of discrimination based on the HTMT approach were met.

Table 1

Measurement Model Evaluation (Validity and Reliability Results)

Construct	Number of Items	Loading Range	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Friendship Quality	23	.811 – .947	.815	.990	.990
Student Engagement	30	.832 – .980	.872	.995	.995
Positive Thinking	15	.875 – .935	.838	.987	.986
Religious Orientation	17	.826 – .925	.806	.986	.985
Happiness	22	.763 – .924	.769	.986	.986

Table 2
Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT)

	Friendship Quality	Happiness	Religious Orientation	Religious Orientation *Friendship Quality	Religious Orientation *Positive Thinking	Religious Orientation *Student Engagement	Positive Thinking
Happiness	.440						
Religious Orientation	.327	.336					
Religious Orientation *Friendship Quality	.118	.155	.081				
Religious Orientation *Positive Thinking	.090	.205	.031	.412			
Religious Orientation *Student Engagement	.061	.204	.181	.418	.429		
Positive Thinking	.311	.411	.326	.089	.059	.083	
Student Engagement	.340	.451	.247	.057	.078	.164	.307

Table 3
Path Coefficient Test and Significance of Influence

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (Bootstrapping)	t-Statistic (Bootstrapping)	p-Value
Friendship Quality -> Happiness	.221	.222	.031	7.136	< .001
Religious Orientation -> Happiness	-.160	-.161	.031	5.212	< .001
Positive Thinking -> Happiness	.191	.192	.028	6.738	< .001
Student Engagement -> Happiness	.254	.253	.027	9.499	< .001
Religious Orientation *Positive Thinking -> Happiness	.094	.095	.031	2.981	.002
Religious Orientation *Student Engagement -> Happiness	.104	.104	.034	3.059	.001
Religious Orientation *Friendship Quality -> Happiness	.020	.019	.037	0.544	.293

Inner Model

The structural model (inner model) was evaluated to examine the predictive relationships between latent variables and to test the proposed hypotheses. This evaluation included the analysis of path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and bootstrapping results (Hair Jr et al., 2014). The analysis aimed to determine the strength, direction, and significance of the relationships between the exogenous and endogenous constructs. A relationship is considered statistically significant when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is less than .05. In addition, the robustness of the estimates was assessed based on the consistency of the bootstrapping results. The results presented in Table 3 provide empirical evidence of both direct and moderating effects among the variables. The significance of the path coefficients was evaluated using bootstrapping procedures, which generate standard errors, t-statistics, and p-values based on resampling techniques (Hair Jr et al., 2014).

Discussion

The influence of friendship quality on happiness was demonstrated to be significant because the t-statistic value of 7.136 was greater than the critical limit of 1.647, and the $p < .001$ were smaller than .05. The results show that the relationship between the two variables is statistically supported, so the hypothesis proposed is accepted. The quality of friendships affects happiness because positive social relationships provide emotional support, a sense of belonging, and life satisfaction (Alsarrani et al., 2022). Fahrezi et al. (2024) also found that friendship quality is important in supporting the happiness of Muslim students. However, Tomé et al. (2014) showed that classmates played a greater role in protecting each other against risky behaviors than in providing high-quality friendships. However, friendship quality remains an important protective factor alongside other aspects, such as

happiness, life satisfaction, and overall quality of life, which contribute to individuals' well-being. Therefore, contextual factors and types of social relationships need to be considered to understand the impact of friendship on happiness. In Islamic studies, the impact of friendship quality on happiness among Muslim students can be explained through the concept of Islamic *ukhuwah*. *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) fosters relationships marked by love and concern for others (Anshori, 2016). Friendship based on faith and piety provides emotional support and motivation in practicing Islamic values. Good relationships with fellow believers also strengthen one's peace of mind (*tuma'ninah*), so that happiness can be maintained more strongly.

In relation to the influence of student engagement on happiness, Boulton et al. (2019) identified a positive interaction between engagement and happiness. Research in Indonesia has also found that students who are more involved in the learning process, actively participate in class, and have a high enthusiasm for learning tend to feel happier in the learning process (Mafaza et al., 2021). It is in line with the findings of Bukowski et al. (1994), who demonstrated that the quality of a friendship relationship consists of five aspects: companionship, conflict, help/aid, security, and closeness. Companionship is defined as friends spending time together; conflict is disputes in friendships over differences of opinion, causing feelings of mutual anger. Help/aid is defined as attitudes of mutual help and protection; security is the ability to trust each other and have reliable relationships; and closeness is feelings of affection or valuable shared experiences with friends that strengthen the bonds of friendship.

In addition, Fangidae and Antika (2023) argue that the quality of Indonesian adolescents' friendships plays a role in determining their happiness, meaning that those who enjoy positive, supportive, and meaningful friendships tend to feel happier and more satisfied with their lives as a

whole. These relationships can provide emotional support, a sense of connection, and opportunities to share experiences and activities, all of which can improve adolescents' psychological well-being. Moreover, Sharma and Parveen (2021) found that the quality of friendships predicts adolescent happiness, as good relationships with friends can provide social support, a sense of acceptance, and opportunities to share positive experiences and emotions. Therefore, when adolescents feel supported and accepted by their peers, they tend to have higher levels of happiness because they feel more connected and valued in their social environment.

The influence of religious orientation on happiness was found to be significant, as the t-statistic value of 5.212 exceeded the critical threshold and the p-value was below .05. The results indicate that the relationship between the two variables is statistically supported, confirming the proposed hypothesis and demonstrating that religious orientation contributes positively to happiness. This finding is consistent with the study of Nadhifah and Wahyuni (2020), who reported that religious orientation played an important role in determining the happiness of boarding school students. Students with an intrinsic religious orientation, namely those who practiced religious teachings sincerely for spiritual purposes, tended to experience higher levels of happiness than those with an extrinsic orientation, who practiced religion primarily for social or personal benefits. The findings reinforce the Islamic concept that faith and piety have a significant impact on individual happiness at both the personal and social levels.

From a positive psychology perspective, happiness is distinguished by two central concepts: hedonism and eudaimonia. The central notion of hedonism is that happiness is distinguished from pleasure (Tiberius & Hall, 2010). In addition, happiness is not achieved through physical pleasure nor is characterized by

a smile or laughter (Huta & Waterman, 2014). On the other hand, the central concept of eudemonia is characterized by pleasure, including the results of contemplation and meaningful conversations (Seligman, 2004). Meanwhile, according to Peterson et al. (2005), happiness consists of three aspects: Life of Engagement, defined as the way individuals perform activities with full involvement in accordance with their interests and competencies; life of meaning, defined as the way individuals perform activities that have meaning in life; and life of pleasure, defined as individuals' ways of undertaking activities that have a focus on the search for pleasure or enjoyment.

In this study, the influence of positive thinking on happiness was found to be significant because the t-statistic value of 6.738 was greater than the critical limit of 1.647, and the p-value of < .001 were smaller than .05. These results show that the relationship between the two variables is statistically supported, so the hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, the higher the level of positive thinking, the greater its contribution to increasing Muslim students' happiness. Kyani (2020) and Taherkhani et al. (2023), also demonstrate that positive thinking can increase happiness. Those who think positively tend to see events more optimistically, so they are happier than those with a negative mindset. In Islam, positive thinking is known as the concept of *husnuzan*, both to Allah and to fellow human beings (Jima'ain et al., 2022; Na'imah et al., 2023; Yucel, 2014). Positive thinking is manifested through *husnuzan* to Allah, patience in facing trials, good prejudice towards others, and gratitude for favors received (Hadziq et al., 2025). These all contribute to true happiness, which is not only worldly, but also *ukhrawi*.

The effect of student engagement on happiness in Muslim students was also found to be significant because the t-statistic value of 9.499 was greater than the critical limit of 1.647, and the p-value of < .001 was less than .05. These results show that students' involvement in academic and

non-academic activities contributes positively to their happiness, so the related hypothesis proposed is accepted. The results of the analysis show that religious orientation significantly moderated the effect of positive thinking on happiness among Muslim students, with a t-statistic of 2.981 exceeding the critical value of 1.647 and $p = .002$. It shows that students' level of religious orientation affects the extent to which positive thinking influences happiness. If religious orientation is intrinsic, with religion lived with full faith and sincerity, then positive thinking tends to further strengthen happiness. It is due to the way individuals understand life with deep religious values, which encourages them to be more optimistic and grateful in the face of various situations.

On the other hand, if religious orientation is extrinsic, with religion used more for social interests or personal comfort, then the moderation that occurs is weaker. Individuals in this category still benefit from positive thinking, but the impact on happiness is not as strong as in intrinsically-oriented individuals. Therefore, it can be concluded that the higher their religious orientation, especially the intrinsic type, the stronger the positive thinking's influence on increasing happiness among Muslim students. Moltafet et al. (2010) argue that individuals with an intrinsic religious orientation are happier than those with an extrinsic orientation.

The results of the analysis show that religious orientation significantly moderated the influence of student engagement on happiness, with a t-statistic value of 3.059, greater than the critical limit of 1.647, and a p-value of .001, lower than .05. This shows that the level of religious orientation affects the extent to which students' involvement in academic and non-academic activities impacts their happiness. If religious orientation is intrinsic, with individuals having deep religious beliefs and sincerely practicing religious teachings, then student engagement tends to have a greater

influence on happiness (Hadziq et al., 2025; Pangastuti et al., 2025). Students with an intrinsic religious orientation feel more fulfilled and satisfied with their involvement, as they see their activities as part of fulfilling religious values that reinforce their happiness. Conversely, when religious orientation is extrinsic, with individuals using religion more for social or personal purposes, the moderation effect is weaker. In this case, student engagement can still influence happiness, but the impact is not as great as it is for individuals with an intrinsic orientation. Overall, the results show that religious orientation plays an important role in strengthening the influence of student engagement on happiness, with stronger moderation in students with an intrinsic religious orientation.

The analysis shows that religious orientation did not significantly moderate the effect of friendship quality on happiness among Muslim students. It is indicated by a t-statistic value of 0.544, which is lower than the critical limit of 1.647, and a p-value of .293, which is greater than .05. Therefore, the moderation hypothesis was rejected. The findings indicate that their level of religious orientation does not influence the relationship between friendship quality and happiness in Muslim students. It means that the quality of friendship still contributes to students' happiness, regardless of whether they have an internal or external religious orientation. It also confirms that social factors play a more dominant role in increasing happiness compared to the religious aspect in the context of social relationships. In this study, religious orientation was measured from intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions, adapting the approach of Allport and Ross (1967). As a moderator, religious orientation means that students with higher intrinsic religiosity, those who live their religion sincerely, show stronger relationships between positive thinking and happiness, and also between student engagement and happiness. This empirical moderation was

confirmed statistically: the interaction terms between religious orientation and positive thinking ($t = 2.981, p < .01$) and between religious orientation and student engagement ($t = 3.059, p < .01$) were significant. Thus, religious orientation strengthens the effects of positive thinking and engagement on happiness (Marliani et al., 2019). However, the moderation was not significant for friendship quality, suggesting that peer relationships predict happiness regardless of religiosity. Therefore, religious orientation functions empirically as a psychological-spiritual buffer, reinforcing the positive effects of engagement and positive thinking on happiness, but not altering the influence of social bonds such as friendship.

Allport and Ross's (1967) study refers to the theory of motivation, which classifies religious orientation into two types: extrinsic and intrinsic. If individuals make their religion their primary goal and inspiration in life, basing every action on it, they are considered to have an intrinsic religious orientation. Our findings are inconsistent with those of Kodaz et al. (2020) concerning whether religion has a significant impact on individuals' subjective happiness level. On the other hand, individuals are said to have an extrinsic religious orientation if they use religion as a means to meet other needs, such as social status, security, or comfort (Galen, 2012). The dimensions of religious orientation consist of: 1) intrinsic orientation, defined as a person's tendency to interpret religion as the main motive in religious beliefs which then bases every action taken in accordance with religious values (Jackson et al., 2018); and 2) extreme orientation, defined as a person's tendency to interpret religion as the fulfillment of personal needs such as social status, self-justification, friendliness, comfort and security (Karimi et al., 2019).

Religious orientation moderates the influence of friendship quality on happiness. Soleimani et al. (2017) found that neither intrinsic nor extrinsic religious orientation can predict happiness.

Regarding the effect of religious orientation on happiness, Sillick and Cathcart (2014) explain that those who have a high extrinsic social religious orientation, that is, they are religiously oriented to seek social support in a religious context, tend to have higher life goals, which increase their happiness level. Some cultures consider social contact to be an important aspect of religious participation, able to increase happiness. Positive emotions such as awe, gratitude, love, and peace are highly valued in the religious and spiritual realms, hence it is understandable why religion and spirituality are beneficial for increasing individual happiness (Van Cappellen et al., 2016). Therefore, this indicates the complexity of adolescent development, in which their happiness is affected by various aspects of life, including peer social relationships.

An R-squared value of .387 for the variables of student engagement, friendship quality, and positive thinking showed that together they explained 38.7% of the variation in happiness among Muslim students. The remainder, namely 61.3%, was influenced by other factors not included in the research model. The R-squared value of .387 is classified as moderate, meaning that the independent variables make a sufficient contribution to explaining student happiness, although other external factors still play a role in determining the level of happiness, such as family conditions and social support. A supportive and stable family has been found to contribute to students' happiness levels (Suud et al., 2024). Emotional and social support from parents or other family members also plays an important role in students' psychological well-being (Kadiri, 2023; Purnomo & Azhar, 2023).

The quality of student education and learning also contributes to student happiness. If students feel motivated and successful in their studies (Riza et al., 2015), their positive perception of teaching quality and a supportive learning environment will significantly increase their satisfaction and

happiness (Thygesen et al., 2020). Interactive and engaging teaching methods, such as those that incorporate the principles of positive psychology, help students discover their strengths and develop essential skills for optimism and resilience (Rae & Macconville, 2014), thereby contributing to student happiness. Other factors that affect students' happiness include their mental and physical health. Good mental health contributes significantly to student happiness (Borjalilu, 2023). However, mental disorders, stress, or physical health problems can affect their psychological well-being (Bahiroh et al., 2020). In addition to external factors that contribute to student happiness, internal factors also strongly determine it, such as self-perception, self-esteem, self-concept, and self-efficacy. Overall, the discussion section explains the relationships among variables and clarifies how religious orientation functions empirically as a moderator. Intrinsic religiosity enhances the positive effects of student engagement and positive thinking on happiness, serving as a psychological-spiritual buffer that promotes resilience and optimism in Muslim students. It means that religious orientation is not only a cultural factor, but also an empirical construct that strengthens the link between educational and psychological variables and well-being outcomes.

The research makes a theoretical contribution by developing a more integrative model of student happiness that incorporates psychosocial and spiritual factors in the Muslim context of Southeast Asia. The findings that student engagement, friendship quality, and positive thinking play a significant role in increasing happiness reinforce positive psychology theories about the importance of engagement, social relationships, and adaptive cognition in individual well-being. In addition, the role of religious orientation as a moderator shows that the spiritual dimension not only functions as an independent variable, but also as a reinforcing mechanism (a psychological-spiritual buffer) that

deepens the influence of psychological factors on happiness. In practical terms, the findings have implications for educational institutions and policymakers in designing holistic interventions, such as programs to increase student engagement, strengthen healthy social relationships, and develop positive mindsets integrated with religious values, aimed at sustainably improving student well-being.

The study has several strengths, including the use of a large cross-border sample from Southeast Asia, which provides a more comprehensive picture of Muslim students' happiness across diverse cultural contexts. In addition, the use of the PLS-SEM approach enabled complex relationship analysis, including moderation effects, resulting in a more integrative and robust model. However, the research also has some limitations. It used only one quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design, which prevented it from capturing the dynamics of changes in student happiness in depth. In addition, the study is limited to a few variables, so it does not include other factors that may also affect student happiness. Therefore, further research is recommended using more diverse approaches, such as mixed-methods or longitudinal designs, as well as expanding the scope of the variables to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

Conclusion

This study concluded that student engagement, friendship quality, and positive thinking are key factors that significantly contribute to the happiness of Muslim students in Southeast Asia. The findings indicate that students who are actively involved in academic and social activities, maintain supportive and meaningful friendships, and develop positive thinking patterns tend to experience higher levels of well-being. The results confirm the proposed model that integrates psychosocial dimensions as central determinants

of student happiness. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that religious orientation plays an important moderating role in strengthening the influence of positive thinking and student engagement on happiness. It suggests that students with stronger internalized religious values are better able to translate positive cognition and active involvement into higher levels of well-being. At the same time, the non-significant moderating effect of religious orientation on the relationship between friendship quality and happiness indicates that social relationships

contribute to happiness regardless of students' level of religiosity. Overall, the study successfully develops a more comprehensive model of student happiness by demonstrating the interactions among psychological, social, and spiritual factors within a Southeast Asian Muslim context. The findings also provide a clearer understanding of how multiple dimensions of students' lives interact to shape their happiness and affirm the importance of integrating these dimensions into future research on student well-being. []

Author Contribution Statement

Fitriah M. Suud: Conceptualization; Methodology; Supervision; Writing Review & Editing; Project Administration; Funding Acquisition. **Mirawati Mirawati:** Data Curation; Validation; Writing – Review & Editing. **Putri Rahmah Nur Hakim:** Investigation; Visualization; Writing Original Draft. **Muhammad Fadli Nugraha:** Validation; Language Editing (Proofreading); Writing Review & Editing. **Tri Na'imah:** Formal Analysis; Data Interpretation; Visualization. **Kartini R. Tahir:** Language Editing; Proofreading; Grammar Refinement.

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