

## THE EFFECT OF SELF-ESTEEM ON HAPPINESS OF STUDENTS IN MEDAN CITY

Marito Siregar<sup>1\*</sup>, Nenny Ika Putri Simarmata<sup>2</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Fakultas Psikologi, Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Medan, Indonesia

<sup>b</sup> Fakultas Psikologi Universitas, HKBP Nommensen Medan, Indonesia

[siregarmarito65@gmail.com](mailto:siregarmarito65@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

Kebahagiaan mahasiswa tidak hanya bergantung pada keberhasilan akademis tetapi juga pada sejauh mana mereka menerima, menghargai, dan mengevaluasi diri mereka sendiri secara positif. Mahasiswa dengan harga diri tinggi cenderung memiliki pandangan hidup yang optimis, mampu mengelola stres, dan merasa puas dengan kehidupan mereka. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui pengaruh harga diri terhadap kebahagiaan di kalangan mahasiswa di Medan. Subjek penelitian adalah mahasiswa aktif di Medan dari tahun ajaran 2021-2024, berusia 18-22 tahun. Ukuran sampel untuk penelitian ini adalah 270 mahasiswa Medan, yang diambil menggunakan purposive sampling. Pengumpulan data menggunakan skala Likert. Analisis data menggunakan analisis deskriptif dan statistik inferensial. Pengujian hipotesis menggunakan regresi linier sederhana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan pengaruh harga diri yang signifikan terhadap kebahagiaan di kalangan mahasiswa di Medan, sebesar 0,556 (55,6%). Semakin tinggi harga diri seorang mahasiswa, semakin tinggi pula tingkat kebahagiaannya..

### ABSTRACT

### Keywords:

Self-Esteem, Happiness, Students, Medan

*Student happiness depends not only on academic success but also on the extent to which they accept, value, and evaluate themselves positively. Students with high self-esteem tend to have an optimistic outlook on life, are able to manage stress, and feel satisfied with their lives. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of self-esteem on happiness among students in Medan. The subjects were active students in Medan from the academic year of 2021-2024, aged 18-22. The sample size for this study was 270 Medan students, drawn using purposive sampling. Data collection used a Likert scale. Data analysis used descriptive analysis and inferential statistics. Hypothesis testing used simple linear regression. The results found a significant effect of self-esteem on happiness among students in Medan, at 0.556 (55.6%). The higher a student's self-esteem, the higher their level of happiness.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A university is a place where students gain knowledge in a specific field to earn diplomas, bachelor's, master's, specialist, and doctoral degrees. The essence of higher education is a learning process, involving the pursuit of information and knowledge, as well as teaching (Widodo & Pratitis, 2013). A university, as a place of learning and

teaching, means striving to acquire knowledge and correct behaviors about something within its environment. Universities have a variety of faculties and departments (Yap & Che Amat, 2021).

Higher education institutions in Indonesia consist of three categories, namely: State Universities (PTN), Private Universities (PTS), Civil Service Universities (PTK). These educational institutions are in the form of Universities, Institutes, Colleges and Academies. Consisting of Undergraduate (SI) with a Bachelor's degree, Diploma I and II with an A.Ma degree, Diploma III with an A.Md degree, Undergraduate or postgraduate (S2) with a Master's degree, and Undergraduate (S3) with a Doctoral degree (DR) (Wang et al., 2024). According to BPS data in 2022, the number of higher education institutions in Medan City under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology according to the Regency/City of North Sumatra Province is 118 Universities, with a total of 10,355 teaching staff and 268,044 students.

A student is a person who is in the process of gaining knowledge or studying and is registered to be undergoing education at one of the forms of higher education consisting of academies, polytechnics, colleges, institutes, and universities (Publication Manuscript – Muhammad Asrul Fajar | 1, 2 CE). Students at the undergraduate level are classified into the average age range of 19-23 years, where at that age they are classified as early adulthood, which is a transitional phase between adolescence and adulthood.

According to Santrock (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004) young adults are in a period of transition, including physical, intellectual, and social role transitions. Meanwhile, according to Erikson (Scheier & Carver, 1985) the early adulthood phase is characterized by the need to make commitments by creating close and stable interpersonal relationships and being able to fully actualize oneself to maintain those relationships.

Students in college academics need to adjust to the academic demands of college and their student life (Suralaga & Rohmah, 2021). The inability to adjust to the academic demands of college and student life can potentially lead to low levels of happiness. This is due to unmet expectations resulting from the inability to make these adjustments.

Happiness is a state of well-being that is meaningful and contributes to improved self-functioning. Happiness is manifested by positive affect (Salavera et al., 2020). Positive affect is a feeling of pleasure resulting from a person's subjective evaluation of their life (Rooij et al., 2018). Someone with a high level of happiness has a more dominant positive affect than negative affect, and vice versa.

In 2021, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) released a happiness index for Indonesia of 71.49%. When viewed across its constituent dimensions, the life satisfaction index was 75.16%, the feelings index was 65.61%, and the meaning of life index was 73.12%. According to 2021 BPS data, Banten Province ranked lowest on the Indonesian Happiness Index, with a score of 68%. This province also had the lowest happiness level on the island of Java (Putra & Ahmad, 2020).

Based on the aspects of happiness, the subject has a realistic aspect of Optimism, the subject wants cum laude by maintaining his grades in every semester, the subject does assignments and carries out practicals from lecturers, but the subject gets his grades dropping every semester, and also resilience, the subject takes freelance work to help

with tuition fees and daily needs and the subject says the subject must make his parents happy.

Happiness has five aspects, namely (1) establishing positive relationships with other people. Positive relationships will be created if there is social support that enables individuals to develop self-esteem, minimize psychological problems, adaptive problem-solving abilities, and make individuals physically healthy. (2) full involvement. Fully involving oneself, not only physically involved, but the heart and mind also participate in these activities (Park et al., 2020).

The third aspect is finding meaning in everyday life. In full involvement and positive relationships with others, another way to be happy is implied, namely finding meaning in whatever one does. Happy individuals will find meaning in everything they do. The fourth aspect is realistic optimism. Individuals who are optimistic about the future feel happier and more satisfied with their lives. Individuals who evaluate themselves in a positive way will have good control over their lives, so they have positive dreams and hopes about the future. This will be created if the optimistic attitude of the individual is realistic. The fifth aspect is resilience. Happy people do not necessarily never experience suffering. Happiness does not depend on how many pleasant events are experienced, but rather on the extent to which a person has resilience, namely the ability to recover from unpleasant events.

Student happiness depends not only on academic success but also on the extent to which they accept, value, and evaluate themselves positively. Students with high self-esteem tend to have an optimistic outlook on life, are able to manage stress, and feel satisfied with their lives. Conversely, students with low self-esteem often feel inadequate, are prone to anxiety, and are less able to enjoy their daily lives. Interviews with two students found that students experienced a decline in happiness despite academic achievement. This indicates an imbalance between external achievements and internal self-assessments. Students are faced with demands to achieve, adapt to new environments, and develop a self-identity toward maturity. Academic pressure, parental expectations, and social comparisons on digital media can influence how students assess themselves, or their self-esteem.

Research conducted by Hapsari (Suralaga & Rohmah, 2021) on 198 students at the Muhammadiyah University of Gresik found that self-esteem influenced student happiness by 18.41%. The results of the happiness variable categorization found that student happiness fell into the moderate category at 77%, and the self-esteem variable found a percentage of 73%. The results also demonstrated the importance of happiness for students (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Similarly, research conducted by Imani (Diener & Tay, 2016) on 200 Banjarmasin students found that self-esteem was a factor influencing the level of consumer behavior among students. Self-esteem contributed 28.1% to consumer behavior, with the remainder being influenced by other factors.

A person who has a high level of self-esteem will feel proud of his attitude and abilities, is able to believe in his own perception so that he does not focus on personal difficulties, is able to evaluate himself through incoming criticism, sees himself as

valuable, important, and worthy, has hopes and goals, and strives to realize himself in the social environment (Coopersmith, 1967). Meanwhile, someone who has a low level of self-esteem tends to be insecure, unable to assess his abilities, believes that he is not loved, does not accept his shortcomings, is sensitive to criticism. Immersed in his personal problems, and withdraws from social interactions (Coopersmith, 1967). Padhly, Rana, and Mishra (Niu, 2023) stated that self-esteem has a positive relationship with happiness, which means that if self-esteem increases, then happiness will also increase.

Self-esteem is an evaluation made by an individual and the habit of viewing himself, especially regarding attitudes of acceptance or rejection, and an indication of the extent of an individual's belief in his abilities, significance, success, and worth (Park et al., 2020). Students who have high self-esteem will develop self-confidence, a sense of self-assurance, a sense of usefulness, and a sense that their presence is needed in this world. Adolescents with low self-esteem will be more prone to negative behavior because self-esteem can influence a person's behavior (Clemes, 2012: 3), so that on campus, students will indirectly face problems due to negative behavior resulting from low self-esteem.

Chakraborty (BPS, 2021) stated that self-esteem is also a crucial component in determining student academic achievement. Students' self-esteem should positively contribute to their academic achievement. Students with high self-esteem will develop self-confidence, a sense of self-assurance, a sense of usefulness, and a sense of being needed in the world. The prevalence of low self-esteem in the world based on research in the world in 2011 showed that data on low self-esteem clients in various countries, the Netherlands 24.99%, Norway 22.37%, Australia 36.85%, Sweden 42.90%, Canada 32.61%, Italy 20.28%, Germany, 16.06%, England 41.73% and the United States 31.92%. In this study, a total of 69,269 clients were conducted, this figure is quite high in various countries in the world. (Kuntari & Nyumirah, 2019). According to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, the prevalence of clients with low self-esteem in Indonesia is more than 30% of clients with self-esteem do not receive treatment. The number of sufferers of mental disorders is 2.5 million consisting of patients with low self-esteem and an estimated 40% suffer from low self-esteem. (Kuntari & Nyumirah, 2019)

According to RISKESDAS (2013) low self-esteem is part of emotional mental problems which nationally account for 11.6% of emotional mental problems, showing a figure of 4.9%. Based on data from Prof. Dr. Soerojo Mental Hospital, Magelang, the number of clients with low self-esteem fluctuated from 2016 to 2018, in 2016 the number of clients was around 451 people, in 2017 it increased to around 479 people, and in 2018 it was around 467 people (Leonita et al., 2020). Based on the above background, the author is interested in researching with the title "The Effect of Self-Esteem on Happiness in Students in Medan City.

## 2. METHOD

Research variables are the initial step used to determine a main variable in a study and find the function of each variable in the study (Azwar, 2016). According to Sugiono (Alvionita et al., 2022) a research variable is an attribute or object that has certain variations that have been determined by researchers so that it can be studied and

ultimately can be drawn to be used as a conclusion. The subjects of this study were students and active students in Medan City from the 2021-2024 academic year.

According to Arikunto (Brickman & Campbell, 1971) population is the entire subject of a study. The population in this study is active male and female students in Medan City who are currently writing their theses. The total population of male and female students in Medan City according to BPS data in 2022 is 268,044 people. The sampling technique used in this study is *purposive sampling*. According to Sugiyono (2017), *purposive sampling* is a sampling technique that adapts to certain criteria or objectives (intentional). The criteria used by the researcher are:

- a. Active students of Medan City.
- b. Students of Stambuk 2021-2024.
- c. Age 18-22 years.

The number of samples used in this study was determined based on the Isaac & Michael table. The main data collection technique is by using a psychological scale as a measuring tool to reveal psychological aspects. A psychological scale is a procedure in collecting data that reveals psychological constructs or concepts that can describe aspects of an individual's personality (Majauskiene & al., 2024). Data collection in this study can be done online and offline. Data collection methods are ways that can be used by researchers to collect data (Diener & Chan, 2011). The research method used is distributing questionnaires. This study uses a questionnaire method or questionnaire using a *Likert scale*. According to Arikunto (2010) a questionnaire is a list of questions given to respondents with the intention that respondents are willing to provide information according to user requests. The data collection method in this study uses a questionnaire or questionnaire to compile a scale of Self-Esteem (Coopersmith, 1967) and Happiness (Seligman, 2005).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will describe the results of the data analysis conducted on respondents, namely students in Medan City. The overall results of the data processing obtained were used to analyze the influence of self-esteem on happiness among students in Medan City (Wang et al., 2024).

#### Research Subject Overview

This study included 270 students from several universities/campuses in Medan. The researchers categorized each student respondent based on gender, age, ethnicity, and university.

**Table 1. Number of Subjects by Gender**

No.	Gender	Amount	Percentage
1	Man	96	35.56%
2	Woman	174	64.44%
	Total	270	100%

The gender in this study consisted of 96 people (35.56%) male subjects and 174 people (64.44%) female subjects.

#### Hypothesis Testing

##### Simple Linear Regression Test

The hypothesis test in this study used simple linear regression. The results of the simple linear regression test can be seen in the following table.

**Table 2. Hypothesis Testing**

R Square	F	Sig.	Unstandardized B	t
0.556	45,846	0,000	68,465 (constant) 0.021	57,160

From the results of a simple linear regression test between the variables of self-esteem and happiness, an R square value of 0.556 was found, which means that there is an influence of the self-esteem variable on happiness on Medan City students, namely 55.6%. Based on the significance value (Sig.), which is 0.000, which is smaller than 0.005, it can be concluded that there is an influence of self-esteem. (X) on happiness (Y) in Medan City students (Lucas & Dyrenforth, 2006). The constant figure is 68.465, which means that if there is no self-esteem (X) then the happiness value is 0.021. The value of the regression coefficient is 0.145, which means that for every additional level of self-esteem (X), happiness (Y) will increase by 0.145, so it can be concluded that self-esteem (X) has a positive effect on happiness (Y) and higher self-esteem (X) will also increase happiness (Y). The regression equation obtained is  $Y = 68.465 + 0.145X$ . Based on the results of the regression test, the hypothesis is accepted, namely  $H_a$  is accepted and  $H_o$  is rejected.

#### t-test

The t test is used to test the significance of the regression coefficient between variables X and Y. with the condition that  $t_{count} > t_{table}$  then  $H_a$  is accepted and if  $t_{count} < t_{table}$  then  $H_o$  is rejected. The t count is 57.160, and t table is 1.649, so that the result is that  $57.160 > 1.649$ , then  $H_a$  is accepted and  $H_o$  is rejected or there is an influence of variable X (self-esteem) on variable Y (happiness).

#### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of self-esteem on happiness among college students in Medan. A normality test revealed a significance value of 0.72 for the self-esteem variable and 0.200 for the happiness variable. The normal distribution of the data also indicates that the distribution of student self-esteem and happiness scores falls within a reasonable range, with no extreme values dominating.

Based on the results of the linearity test obtained, it is known that the F value is 1.413 with a significance value (sig) of 0.000. The significance value is smaller than 0.05 ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ), which means there is a linear relationship between the variables of self-esteem and happiness (Hurlock, 2011). Thus, it can be concluded that the research data meets the linearity assumption. These results indicate that the higher the self-esteem of students, the higher the level of happiness they feel. Conversely, when self-esteem decreases, the level of happiness of students also tends to decrease. This linear relationship strengthens the assumption that self-esteem has a consistent influence on happiness.

Based on the results of a simple linear regression test conducted between the variables of self-esteem (X) and happiness (Y) in students in Medan City, an R Square value of 0.556 was obtained. This shows that the self-esteem variable is able to explain 55.6% of the variation in student happiness, while the remaining 44.4% is influenced by

other factors not examined in this study, such as social support factors, economic conditions, academic achievement, and other psychological factors.

In addition, the results of the significance test show a Sig. value of 0.000, which is smaller than the significance level of 0.05. This means that there is a significant influence between self-esteem and student happiness (Santrock, 2012). In other words, the higher the self-esteem a student has, the higher the level of happiness they feel. The regression equation obtained is  $Y = 68.465 + 0.145X$ . The constant coefficient (68.465) indicates that when self-esteem has no influence ( $X = 0$ ), then student happiness remains at a certain baseline. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient of 0.145 indicates that every one unit increase in self-esteem will increase happiness by 0.145. This positive coefficient value indicates that the relationship between self-esteem and happiness is unidirectional (positive) (Kuntari & Nyumirah, 2019).

The results of this study align with research conducted by Suralaga (2021) on 177 Psychology students at UIN Jakarta, which found that self-esteem had a significant and positive influence on happiness. Similarly, research conducted by Hapsari (2022) on 198 students at Muhammadiyah University of Gresik found that self-esteem had an 18.41% influence on student happiness.

Research shows the influence of self-esteem on happiness. Individuals with high self-esteem typically find it easier to build positive relationships with others, are more confident in achieving success, and are able to find meaning in their lives. These three aspects are essential components for achieving sustainable happiness. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem struggle to establish social relationships, feel less capable of achieving success, and tend to lose their direction in life. These conditions make it difficult for them to experience full happiness (Diener et al., 2018).

The culture of academic competition, the assessment system, and student-faculty relationships play a strong role in shaping self-esteem. A supportive campus *climate* tends to strengthen self-esteem and provide a network of relationships (*social capital*) that enhances happiness; conversely, a hypercompetitive culture can damage the self-esteem of students who frequently compare themselves. While self-esteem has been shown to have a significant influence, student happiness is not solely determined by these internal factors. Social support from peers and family, economic conditions, academic demands, and mental health also influence happiness.

Happiness is not only defined as a positive emotional experience, but also includes engagement, positive relationships, meaning in life, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2005). Happiness in students is a psychological condition that is not only influenced by external factors such as the academic, social, and economic environment, but also by internal factors, one of which is self-esteem. According to Seligman (2005), happiness or *well-being* is a combination of five main elements, namely *Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment*. Positive self-esteem will support the formation of positive emotions, full involvement in academic and social activities, building healthy relationships with friends and lecturers, finding meaning in college life, and achieving satisfying achievements.

Happiness can also be explained through the perspective of *Subjective Well-Being* (SWB), which emphasizes affective (feelings of happiness, life satisfaction) and cognitive (evaluation of quality of life) components. Students with high self-esteem tend to have positive self-evaluations, feel competent, and valuable, thus finding it easier to experience satisfaction in daily life. This aligns with Diener's findings, who stated that individuals with high self-esteem show greater levels of life satisfaction.

Coopersmith (1967) defined self-esteem as a comprehensive evaluation of one's worth, competence, and worthiness, formed through social experiences (acceptance, recognition, and success). Individuals with high self-esteem tend to have confidence in their abilities, respond adaptively to failure, and are more open to interpersonal relationships. These states facilitate the experience of positive emotions and a satisfying assessment of life. Therefore, the existence of a strong positive relationship between self-esteem and happiness in college students can be explained as a mechanism by which self-esteem positions individuals to achieve or appreciate aspects of life that support happiness.

The link between self-esteem and happiness can be understood through *self-determination theory* (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004) which emphasizes that basic human needs include autonomy, competence, and social connectedness. Healthy self-esteem strengthens the fulfillment of these three basic needs. For example, individuals who value themselves are more confident in making independent decisions (autonomy), perceive themselves as competent in completing academic tasks (competence), and more easily establish meaningful relationships with peers (*relatedness*). Students with high self-esteem tend to have strong *self-efficacy* (Bandura, 1997). Belief in their ability to achieve goals makes them more resilient to academic pressure, recovers more quickly from failure, and is less prone to feelings of anxiety or low self-esteem. This condition contributes to positive emotional stability, which ultimately increases happiness.

Carlén, Suominen, and Augustine (2023) found that self-esteem in adolescents has a long-term effect on well-being, even after controlling for socioeconomic factors. A similar study by Wang et al. (2024) showed that in Chinese college students, self-esteem is not only directly related to happiness but also acts as a mediator in the relationship between personality and psychological well-being. Research by Li and colleagues (2025) also revealed that self-esteem and resilience form a chain mediation pathway that significantly increases happiness in college students.

The results of the categorization of happiness variables found the largest percentage in the high category (78.1%), indicating that most students have a positive psychological condition, characterized by satisfaction with life, dominant positive emotions, and a sense of meaning in carrying out daily activities. This is in line with the definition of happiness according to Seligman (Harter, 2012) in the concept of *Authentic Happiness*, which emphasizes that happiness is not only the absence of negative emotions, but also the presence of positive emotions, life satisfaction, and involvement in meaningful activities. The finding that only 0.4% of students are in the low category indicates that the determining factors of happiness, such as social support, the ability to manage stress, and the level of self-esteem, seem to be relatively fulfilled in the student

population studied. Meanwhile, 21.5% of students are in the medium category, which can be interpreted that some students are still in the transition stage in finding emotional balance and fulfilling their psychological needs.

Students who have the opportunity to develop their potential, feel capable of overcoming academic challenges, and receive social support from peers and family tend to be happier. Phenomenologically, high levels of student happiness can also be influenced by social and cultural environmental factors. Students in Indonesia generally still receive emotional support from their families, both moral and material. This provides a sense of security and reduces anxiety about the future. Furthermore, student involvement in organizations, communities, and social activities strengthens interpersonal relationships, which, according to Ryff (1995), is an important dimension of psychological well-being. However, the presence of 21.5% of students in the moderate category indicates that not all students achieve optimal happiness. Factors such as academic pressure, economic hardship, and feelings of loneliness *can* contribute to the persistence of students with moderate to low levels of happiness. According to Weiss (1973), one factor that can reduce happiness is feelings of loneliness, both emotional and social. Students who lack adequate social support or feel isolated from their environment may experience decreased feelings of happiness.

The categorization of happiness based on these aspects found that students in Medan tended to have high levels of social relationships, full engagement, finding meaning, and realistic optimism, but relatively more variation in resilience. This indicates that student happiness largely stems from the quality of social relationships, involvement in activities, and the ability to find meaning, while resilience still needs to be strengthened.

Regarding the aspect of establishing positive relationships with others, 88.1% of respondents were found to be in the high category, while only 1.9% were in the low category. This indicates that students have good abilities in establishing healthy, warm, and meaningful social relationships. This finding supports the *Self-Determination theory* of Deci and Ryan (2000), which states that social connectedness *is* one of the basic human needs that plays a vital role in improving psychological well-being. Students who are able to build positive relationships will feel more accepted, loved, and supported by their environment, thus giving rise to feelings of happiness. Recent research by Carlén, Suominen, and Augustine (2023) also found that the quality of good social relationships contributes to increased long-term happiness.

In terms of full engagement, 82.2% of respondents were found to be in the high category. This figure indicates that the majority of students are able to fully engage in both academic and non-academic activities. This condition can be explained through the concept of *flow* from Csikszentmihalyi (1990), which describes the optimal experience when individuals are immersed in activities that are challenging but appropriate to their abilities. Full engagement increases satisfaction, reduces stress, and fosters positive emotions that contribute to happiness. Research by Wang et al. (2024) also supports this, finding that students who are able to fully engage in academic activities have higher

levels of happiness because they feel a sense of control and meaning over the activities they undertake.

In the aspect of finding meaning in everyday life, it was found that most students (83.3%) were in the high category in this aspect, which means they were able to find meaning in daily activities. According to Frankl (1963) in his *logotherapy theory*, finding meaning is the core of human happiness because it gives direction to life and enables individuals to survive in the face of suffering. This finding is in line with the results of research by Li et al. (2025), which showed that finding meaning in everyday life, supported by self-esteem and resilience, contributes significantly to improving *subjective well-being* in students.

In terms of realistic optimism, 78.1% of students were found to be in the high category, while only 2.2% were in the low category. This indicates that the majority of students have a positive outlook on the future but remain realistic in assessing the challenges they will face. Scheier and Carver (1985) explain that optimism is closely related to adaptive coping strategies and the ability to deal with stress. With realistic optimism, students not only have positive expectations but are also able to balance expectations with realistic efforts. A recent study by Wang et al. (2024) confirmed that realistic optimism is an important factor mediating the relationship between self-esteem and student happiness.

The resilience aspect shows a more varied distribution, with 55.9% in the high category, 40% in the medium category, and 4.1% in the low category. This means that some students still face challenges in their ability to bounce back from failure or stress. Tugade and Fredrickson (Nguyen et al., 2024) explain that resilience plays a crucial role in maintaining positive emotions when facing stress, thus preventing individuals from falling into prolonged negative states. This finding is also supported by research by Li et al. (2025), who found that resilience, along with self-esteem, forms a mediating pathway that improves *subjective well-being*. This indicates that even though some students are still in the medium category, the presence of resilience still makes a significant contribution to happiness.

In terms of individual strengths and exemplary ability, 36 students (13.3%) were in the low category, 148 students (54.8%) in the medium category, and 86 students (31.9%) in the high category. These results confirm that most students are in the medium category, meaning they have an awareness of personal responsibility but are not yet fully confident in positively influencing others.

Coopersmith's (1967) self-esteem theory states that individuals with high self-esteem tend to have a positive influence on their social environment because they are able to demonstrate consistent, responsible behavior and serve as role models. Bandura (1997) adds that the ability to set an example is related to social *self-efficacy*, which is the confidence to influence the behavior of others through one's own actions. Research by Nguyen et al. (2024) found that students who are able to set a positive example for their peers tend to have higher psychological well-being because they feel valued and have a meaningful role in their social environment.

The results of the happiness categorization based on gender found that in male subjects, there was 1 person (1%) in the low category, 21 people (21.9%) in the medium category, and 74 people (77.1%) in the high category. This indicates that most male students experience high levels of happiness, with positive perceptions of their quality of life, social relationships, and personal achievements. Research by Frey and Stutzer (2002) showed that men tend to emphasize achievement and accomplishment as indicators of well-being, so that academic success and extracurricular activities play an important role in increasing their happiness. Recent research by Li et al. (2025) showed that internal psychological factors such as self-esteem, optimism, and resilience contribute significantly to *the subjective well-being* of male students. Students with high self-confidence are better able to cope with academic pressure and maintain positive experiences, thereby increasing their level of happiness.

Among female subjects, none were found in the low category, 37 (21.3%) in the medium category, and 137 (78.7%) in the high category. This distribution indicates that female students tend to maintain a more stable level of happiness than male students. According to Diener et al. (2018), women typically have higher levels of positive experiences related to social relationships and the quality of interpersonal interactions. This supports the finding that social connectedness plays a significant role in women's happiness, in line with Deci and Ryan's (2000) *Self-Determination theory*, which emphasizes social connectedness as a basic human need. Female students tend to be able to build and maintain meaningful relationships, thus maintaining their psychological well-being. In addition, research by Matud (2004) shows that women tend to be more expressive in expressing positive emotions and seeking social support when facing stress, which contributes to a more stable experience of happiness (Salavera et al., 2020).

Happiness between men and women is relatively balanced, with the majority falling in the high category. The main difference lies in the low category, where a small number of male students experienced low happiness, while no female students fell into this category. Research by Lucas & Dyrenforth (2006) shows that men tend to emphasize material aspects and achievement as determinants of happiness, while women emphasize social relationships and emotional support. This explains why female students tend to have a more stable distribution of happiness. Furthermore, Fredrickson (2001) in his *Broaden-and-Build theory* emphasized that experiencing positive emotions broadens thinking and builds psychological, social, and physical resources. Female students who are more emotionally expressive tend to experience long-term positive effects from these emotions, thereby increasing their capacity to cope with stress and building happiness.

Men often gain self-esteem through achievement, competence, and public social recognition. This is consistent with research by Frey & Stutzer (2002), which shows that men tend to assess happiness and self-satisfaction through academic achievement or competence in activities. Women's self-esteem is formed more through social interactions and support from their environment (Coopersmith, 1967). Research by Matud (2004) supports this, showing that women are more expressive in expressing positive emotions and rely more on social support to boost their self-esteem.

The results of the happiness categorization based on age found that the majority of respondents in almost all age groups tended to be in the high happiness category. The highest dominance of the high category was seen in the 19-year-old age group (85.7%) and 20-year-old age group (84.8%), indicating that individuals in early young adulthood generally experience very high levels of happiness. The 21-23 age group maintained the dominance of the high category with percentages between 75% and 79.7%, although the proportion of individuals in the medium category increased slightly compared to the 19- and 20-year-old age groups. At age 18, the distribution of happiness appeared more balanced, with 44.4% of respondents in the medium category and 55.6% in the high category, so the dominance of high happiness was not as strong as at older ages. Meanwhile, the low happiness category almost did not appear, except in the 22-year-old age group with a very small percentage, namely 1.6%. These findings overall indicate that most respondents in the 18–23 age range had high levels of happiness, with a tendency to increase and become more stable at ages 19–23, indicating positive developments in subjective well-being during the early transition to young adulthood.

At the age of 18–23, individuals are in the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage ( *adolescence–young adulthood* ) and enter the *Intimacy vs. Isolation stage* (early adulthood). Successfully establishing self-identity and satisfying social relationships contribute to self-esteem. A moderate category of dominance indicates that most individuals are still in the process of building identity and self-confidence, while a high category indicates that individuals have been quite successful in developing self-esteem (Erikson, 1968). Self-esteem, according to Coopersmith (1967), is influenced by social support, personal achievement, and positive experiences. A moderate category of dominance indicates that most young adults are in the process of building their self-evaluation.

Overall, individual self-esteem between the ages of 18 and 23 shows positive development, with most individuals in the moderate to high self-esteem category. Although there are fluctuations, particularly between the ages of 20 and 23, this phenomenon reflects the complex dynamics of psychosocial development during the transition to young adulthood. Factors such as personal achievements, social relationships, and life experiences play a significant role in shaping individuals' self-evaluations during this period.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

- a. Based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out, it can be concluded that
- b. Self-esteem significantly impacted happiness among students in Medan, at 0.556, or 55.6%. The higher a student's self-esteem, the higher their level of happiness.
- c. Overall, the majority of students reported high levels of happiness across nearly all aspects, including social relationships, engagement in activities, finding meaning, optimism, and resilience. These results indicate that students generally report high levels of happiness, are able to build positive relationships, find meaning in life, and demonstrate optimism and resilience.

- d. Overall, students' self-esteem fell into the moderate to high category across nearly all aspects analyzed, reflecting moderate to positive self-evaluations. Although most students demonstrated relatively good self-esteem, a significant proportion remained in the low category, particularly in the areas of self-confidence and competence.
- e. The results of the happiness categorization based on gender found that the majority of male respondents (77.1%) and female respondents (78.7%) were in the high category, indicating that the measured variables were at a good level in both gender groups. Women were slightly higher in the high category, while the low category only appeared in men (1%). Thus, both men and women generally showed predominantly high levels of achievement on these variables, with relatively small differences between genders.
- f. The results of the happiness categorization based on age found that the majority of respondents in all age groups showed high levels of the measured variables. The highest percentage of the high category was found in the 19–20 year olds (84.8–85.7%), while the 21–23 year olds remained predominantly high, although the proportion of moderate increased slightly (75–79.7%). At the age of 18, the distribution of the moderate and high categories was more balanced, and the low category almost did not appear, except at the age of 22 years (1.6%). This finding confirms that the levels of the measured variables tend to be high and stable in the 19–23 year old age range.
- g. The results of the self-esteem categorization based on gender found that the majority of male and female respondents were in the moderate category, indicating a tendency toward a moderate level of the variable. Slightly more women were in the high category (27%) than men (25%), while the low category was nearly equal in both genders. This confirms the dominance of the moderate category in both groups, with women tending to be superior in the high category.
- h. The results of the self-esteem categorization based on age found that the majority of respondents aged 18–23 years were in the medium category, indicating a variable level that tended to be medium. Although the age of 19–20 years had a relatively large percentage of the high category, and the age of 22 years the lowest, this distribution confirmed the dominance of the medium category with small variations in the low and high categories, as well as a tendency for a more diverse distribution in more mature ages

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