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## The Younger the Happier

**ABSTRACT:** *The school should be a place to spend time by playing and enjoying their childhood and adolescence. So, the school should not to becomes the main source of stress for the child. This research aimed to identify the difference in the happiness of students based on gender, age, and class' level, as well as identify the aspects that affect the happiness of students. This research uses a quantitative approach. The sample numbered 332 respondents was selected using simple random sampling techniques, with details of the student's 112 students grade 10; 108 students grade 11; and 112 students grade 12. The instruments used in the form of a detailed questionnaire "Happiness in School" compiled by researcher with reference to the five aspects of happiness according to M.E.P. Seligman (2011), which are: Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships positive, Meaning of life or Meaningfulness, and Accomplishment categories, abbreviated as PERMA. Analytical technique used in this research is t-test, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), and multiple regressions. There are two findings of this research, namely: the existence of a distinction based on age of happiness as well as aspects of the engagement is the most influential aspect of student's in school. Based from these findings, it is expected that the teacher could design a class regarding to the aspects of engagement, which can increase happiness.*

**KEY WORD:** *Happiness; Source of Happiness; School; Adolescent; PERMA.*

**ABSTRAKSI:** *"Yang Muda yang Bahagia". Sekolah harus menjadi tempat untuk menghabiskan waktu dengan bermain dan menikmati masa kecil dan remaja mereka. Jadi, sekolah seharusnya tidak menjadi sumber utama stres bagi anak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi perbedaan kebahagiaan siswa berdasarkan jenis kelamin, usia, dan jenjang kelas, serta mengidentifikasi aspek yang mempengaruhi kebahagiaan siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif. Sampel berjumlah 332 responden dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik random sampling sederhana, dengan rincian 112 siswa kelas 10; 108 siswa kelas 11; dan 112 siswa kelas 12. Instrumen yang digunakan berupa kuisioner "Bahagia in Sekolah" disusun oleh peneliti dengan mengacu pada lima aspek kebahagiaan menurut M.E.P. Seligman (2011), yaitu: "Positive emotion" (Emosi positif), "Enggagement" (Keterlibatan), "Relationship positive" (Hubungan positif), "Meaning of life or Meaningfulness" (Hidup bermakna), dan "Accomplishment" (Berprestasi), disingkat PERMA. Teknik analisis yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah uji t, ANOVA (Analisis Varians), dan regresi jamak. Terdapat dua temuan dari penelitian ini, yaitu: adanya perbedaan kebahagiaan berdasarkan usia serta aspek keterlibatan yang merupakan aspek paling berpengaruh terhadap kebahagiaan siswa selama berada di sekolah. Berpijak dari temuan tersebut, diharapkan guru dapat merancang pembelajaran dengan memperhatikan aspek keterlibatan para siswa yang dapat meningkatkan kebahagiaan mereka.*

**KATA KUNCI:** *Kebahagiaan; Sumber Kebahagiaan; Sekolah; Remaja; PERMA.*

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**Suggested Citation:** Agustina, Sherly. (2018). "The Younger the Happier" in *MIMBAR PENDIDIKAN: Jurnal Indonesia untuk Kajian Pendidikan*, Volume 3(1), March, pp.45-58. Bandung, Indonesia: UPI [Indonesia University of Education] Press, ISSN 2527-3868 (print) and 2503-457X (online).

**Article Timeline:** Accepted (December 25, 2017); Revised (February 14, 2018); and Published (March 30, 2018).

## INTRODUCTION

The school comes from the Greek language: *skhole*, *scola*, *scolae* or *skhola*, which means leisure or spare time when the school was the leisure activities for children (cited in Quiles, 2009; and Hernawati, 2014). Based from that understanding, the school should be a place to spend time by playing and enjoying their childhood and adolescence. In this context, Marcy L. Kusz (2009) and Desmita (2012), however, mentioned that the school becomes the main source of stress for the child (Kusz, 2009; and Desmita, 2012).

Based on Minister Regulation Number 23, Article 2, Year 2017 about School Days that set the school 8 hours a day and 5 days a week made the children spent much of their time at the school. They must complete tasks given by the school, meet the demands of the teachers, knowing and known people, explaining and limiting behavior, feelings and attitudes as well as required to pass the test at the school (*cf* Hasan, 2006; Basuki, 2009; Banawi *et al.*, 2016; and Rahem, 2017).

Physiological and psychological adjustment abilities are indispensable, so the students could face tasks and demands of school well and reach high academic achievement (Dunlosky *et al.*, 2013; and Wardana & Dinata, 2016). The students who do not have these abilities would cause negative emotions, such as tense, anxious, difficult to concentrate, and stress (Desmita, 2012; Kinantie, Hernawaty & Hidayati, 2012; Wibawa & Widiasavitri, 2013; and Deasyanti, 2015).

Based on the survey results by DeQuincy A. Lezine & David Brent (2008) and S. Agmasari (2016), stress in learning can cause the students to hurt themselves, having an eating disorder and conduct an attempt to kill themselves or suicidal (Lezine & Brent, 2008; and Agmasari, 2016). The survey also showed that students experienced a mild stroke, due to stress that caused by national exams (Ariani, 2016; and

Essel & Owusu, 2017).

The news analyze more about stress, which occur in the world of education. One of these news mentions that 8% residents of psychiatric hospital in Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia were dominated by adolescents and caused by the education, as cited by *Waspada* online in 2015. *Tribun News*, in 2014, reported also about a schoolgirl who hanged herself, because she could not pass the national exam. *Harian Umum Tribun Jambi* in Sumatera, in 2010, reported the students who committed suicide, due to an unsatisfactory score (cited in Murti *et al.* eds., 2015; and Adi, 2017).

That news indicated that teen or adolescent's students tend to experience stress; and one of the sources is the education. Contrary to the statements of Ki Hadjar Dewantara (1962) in the context of Indonesians, as stated also by N. Noddings (2014) in the context of Americans, that education's aim is to guide children as a human being and as a member of the society to be able to attain salvation and happiness both personal as well as collectively (*cf* Dewantara, 1962; Kalidjernih, 2005; Noddings, 2014; and Juharyanto, 2017).

Education should bring happiness on the students itself as well as the environment. Creating happiness in education means engaging students to seek knowledge and competency with the challenges and struggles, so that the students are able to give values in difficult times and take values in learning. Happiness in learning will make the students totally involved both mental or psychic and physical (Feinstein *et al.*, 2006; and Desmita, 2012).

Teachers and students should have a strong relationship, so that there is no forced feeling or pressured by the other with fun learning (Rusman, 2010; and Furrer, Skinner & Pitzer, 2014). In this context, D. Meier (2002) has given the sense of fun as a learning atmosphere in a state of joy. The joyful atmosphere does not simply mean

noisy scene, wasted, frivolous pleasure, and shallow excitement (Meier, 2002).

Learning which occurred in fun atmosphere and memorable can attract students to engage actively, so the goal of learning can be fully achieved (Timperley *et al.*, 2007; and Trinova, 2012). Y. Kwartolo (2007) showed also that the fun learning includes good planning from teachers, making the settings area in the early learning, teachers' personality which filled with laughter and jokes, and also reflection undertaken between teachers for student's progress (Kwartolo, 2007).

Students must also be facilitated to be able to learn both individually and group, to perform discussion, learn to seek and find, doing an observation or sighting, do a self-reflection, active and communicative, so that the learning atmosphere becomes fun (Timperley *et al.*, 2007; and Trinova, 2012).

Fun atmosphere in learning formed in the process of learning, which bring out positive emotions in students. The important role of positive emotions in the self-adjustment to stress can be explained through the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson *et al.*, 2003). Positive mood yields wider attention, more creative thinking and more holistic thought. Contrary to the negative mood, which causes the narrow attention, critical thinking, and analytical thinking (Nguyen & Youssef, 2006).

Negative emotions can be reduced with the use of guidance methods, such as self-efficacy training to lower anxiety in students who confronted with final exam (Nguyen & Youssef, 2006; and Nurlaila, 2011), or positive thinking training in order to lower the stress level on students as well as make individual can accept the situation positively (Limbert, 2004; Yanuarti, 2007; and Kholidah, 2012). Coping stress strategy, which performed by I.P. Hernawati (2014), is a self adaptation against a relatively difficult conditions and not fun (Hernawati, 2014).

The results of the research undertaken by researcher focus more on intervention, while the depiction of a level of happiness as well as the aspects that affect the students' happiness in learning is not yet known. The results of this research are expected to add insight and knowledge for teachers and parents to be able to manage and provide learning with regard to affected aspect.

**On the Happiness.** Happiness is a positive feelings, including happy, peaceful, and serene setting that is important in the life of every human being regardless of age limit (Rusydi, 2007; Goldwater, 2010; and Agustina, 2018). Related to that, C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez (2007) and Sherly Agustina (2018) said that happiness involves positive emotions that defined subjectively by each person (Snyder & Lopez, 2007; and Agustina, 2018).

Positive emotion are felt by someone and positive activities that are preferred by that person will bring happiness (Seligman, 2005 and 2011; and Pujiwati, 2014). The more positive activities that person does the greater the satisfaction in his/her life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; and Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Life satisfaction is the result of a comparison between the events experienced with something which became the object of hope and desire. More fulfilled the expectations and desires of someone, so the level of satisfaction of that person (Veenhoven, 1996; and Asadi-Lari, 2004).

When the level of life satisfaction is high and negative affect is low, it is called as positive psychology state of happiness (Carr, 2004; and Manzoor *et al.*, 2014). Life satisfaction is one's assessment of his/her life personally and not by experts. This assessment includes cognitive assessment, i.e. self/private domain, family, peers, health, finance, work, and leisure; and affective assessment, i.e. negative and positive affect (Diener, 2009). Someone's perception about how satisfied his/her life as an ongoing evaluation against the events of

his/her life, it is called subjective well-being (Manzoor *et al.*, 2014).

In addition to the term subjective well-being, D.S. Dunn, D.J. Fisher & B.M. Beard (2012) explained the positive state which related to happiness, called quality of life (Dunn, Fisher & Beard, 2012). While E. Diener & R. Biswas-Diener (2002) added that happiness is the quality of the whole human life, or what makes life to be good thoroughly, such as health, creativity, and have a high income (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). Adrian Furnham (2008) also stated that happiness is a part of prosperity, "*Contentment to do your satisfaction or equally the absence of psychology distress*" (Furnham, 2008).

There are many concepts and studies about how someone was able to achieve the happiness that can improve the quality of life, ranging from external things that make individuals unhappy subjectively, as well as the meaning of what can be taken from each pieces of the events in his/her life (*cf* Irwin, 1988 and 1999; and Snyder & Lopez, 2007). J.P. Alston & C.J. Dudley (1973), as cited also in E.B. Hurlock (2004), stated that happiness is a person's ability to enjoy his experiences (Alston & Dudley, 1973; and Hurlock, 2004).

It was concluded that happiness is a state of the perceived positive individuals based on his/her judgement to their life satisfaction, which marked by positive feelings and emotions caused by their positive activity which need to be done to improve the quality of his/her life.

#### ***On the Happiness in Learning.***

Education, according to Ki Hadjar Dewantara (1962), is to guide all the nature that exists in children, so that they are as human beings and as members of the public can reach salvation and happiness as high as possible (Dewantara, 1962). According to N. Noddings (2014), happiness should be the goal of education, and good education must contribute to personal and collective happiness. Children and also adults learning

with the best results if they are happy, but it does not mean that giving hard and anger method are not effective in learning, the challenges and struggles on students can be used to seek knowledge and competence (Nodding, 2014).

The teacher should create the struggle on the students and the students will be thrilled, when able to give meaning in difficult times and get results through struggle. This means that students are happy when it can take what he/she can take in learning (Dieker & Murawski, 2003; and Timperley *et al.*, 2007).

Children's initiative to study shall die, when exposed to various kinds of rules which are not related with the study. The number of rules that are often made by the teacher and must be will make the children always covered in fear. Furthermore, the child will lose the freedom to do something and self-control. And then, the children will develop a self-defense, so they can not get the aims in learning but rather how to overcome the fear (Spellings ed., 2005; and Phaneuf, 2008).

The ability to make plans is something that makes sense for humans to do self-regulation. Therefore, humans can get happiness and thanks to self-regulation, humans can avoid pain and discomfort which help them to achieve the goal. R. Veenhoven (1994) and Andrea Lavazz (2016) said that happiness is not a trait but rather an ordinary variable, so that it can be learned and conditioned in such way to get or have it (Veenhoven, 1994; and Lavazz, 2016).

***On the Aspects of Happiness.*** Happiness, according to M.E.P. Seligman (2011), and cited also by Alena Slezackova (2017), have five measureable elements, they are: *Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship positive, Meaning of life or Meaningfulness, and Accomplishment.* All these elements are abbreviated as PERMA (Seligman, 2011; and Slezackova, 2017).

*Positive emotion* is a level of positive emotions which felt by the students, when they are learning in the classroom and

**Table 1:**  
Average Differentiation Test of Happiness Based on Class' Ladder, Gender, and Age

Aspects	Class' Ladder		Gender		The Age of	
	SIG	F	SIG	T	SIG	F
<i>Happiness</i>	0.892	0114	0.65	0.455	0.050	2.355
<i>Positive emotions</i>	0.87	0.14	0.66	-0.440	0.018	3.035
<i>Engagement</i>	0.12	2.136	0.96	-0.5	0.010	3.377
<i>Relationships positive</i>	0.77	0.261	0.609	-0.512	0.378	1.056
<i>Meaningfulness</i>	0.525	0.646	0.358	-0.92	0.171	1.610
<i>Achievements</i>	0.891	0.116	0.385	-0.863	0.637	0.636

**Table 2:**  
Multiple Correlation of Happiness Based on Gender and Class' Ladder

Classes	10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> Class		10 <sup>th</sup> Class		11 <sup>th</sup> Class		12 <sup>th</sup> Class	
	Female and Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
<i>Constanta</i>	-0.018	0.035	0.003	-0.052	0.050	-0.034	-0.044	
<i>Positive emotions</i>	1.020	1.000	0.968	1.025	0.936	1.041	0.981	
<i>Engagement</i>	1.004	0.966	0.998	1.001	0.989	1.016	0.997	
<i>Relationships positive</i>	0.987	0.995	1.040	0.993	1.005	0.988	1.042	
<i>Meaningfulness</i>	1.012	1.007	1.014	0.997	0.998	1.030	1.014	
<i>Achievements</i>	0.992	1.010	0.980	1.019	1.044	0.954	0.997	

**Table 3:**  
Determination Coefficient of Student's Happiness Based on Gender and Class Ladder

Class	General		10 <sup>th</sup> Class		11 <sup>th</sup> Class		12 <sup>th</sup> Class	
	Female and Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
<i>Positive emotions</i>	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	
<i>Engagement</i>	9%	8%	8%	8%	8%	9%	16%	
<i>Relationships positive</i>	5%	7%	5%	4%	8%	6%	9%	
<i>Meaningfulness</i>	7%	5%	5%	7%	6%	7%	6%	
<i>Achievements</i>	5%	6%	4%	5%	8%	5%	4%	

the level of positive activities conducted while in school. *Engagement* is a student's involvement level which marked with focus and engaged when learning at school. *Relationship positive* is a student's trust level, ones who cared, loved, appreciated, and considered important by the environment in the school. *Meaning of life or Meaningfulness* is a student's appreciation level to his/her learning goal. *Accomplishment* is a level of achievement, success, and mastery of students in learning (Seligman, 2011; and Slezackova, 2017).

None of these elements is defined as happiness, but every aspect of it

has contributions and strengths toward happiness. Each element must have three things. Firstly, it must contribute to happiness. Secondly, it sought to obtain the benefit of the element itself is not to get the other elements. Thirdly, these elements are defined and measured independently from other elements or exclusive (Seligman, 2011; and Slezackova, 2017).

*Age.* Life satisfaction increased slowly with age, pleasant affect dropped a bit and unpleasant affect unchanged (Seligman, 2005 and 2011).

*Gender.* Gender has inconsistent relationship with happiness. Women have

a more extreme emotional life than men, in which women are reported to have a negative effect and tend to be more depressed than men, so women often do therapy to heal (Eddington & Shuman, 2005; and Slezackova, 2017).

## METHOD

This research used a quantitative approach to 332 children aged 13-17 years, high school's female and male, using simple probability sampling (Creswell, 2009; and Hardin, 2014). The first stage is doing preparatory research. The second phase is the development of research instruments based on the theory of happiness expressed by M.E.P. Seligman (2011) and cited also by Alena Slezackova (2017), which consists of 5 aspects, such PERMA: *Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship positive, Meaning of life or Meaningfulness, and Accomplishment* (Seligman, 2011; and Slezackova, 2017).

Furthermore, two people who are experts in their field conduct expert judgement to happiness questionnaire to assess the accuracy of the statement with the indicators of each aspect. Readability test instrument of 5 high school students from different schools to know interpretation of respondents against items, which included in the instrument (Creswell, 2009; and Ploughman *et al.*, 2010).

After acquiring the trial results and done the adjustment, then performed a validity and reliability test using software rasch (Winstep 3.73); and the results, from 50 items tested, there were 4 items that indicated with low validity or not suitable (outliers or misfit) and the remaining 46 statement with person's reliability coefficient of 0.92 which means has a very good reliability (Creswell, 2009; and Ploughman *et al.*, 2010).

On the implementation, data analysis using the t-test to see an average differentiation of gender variables, and

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test to view any average differentiation in age and class' ladder (Park, 2005; and Creswell, 2009).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

**Findings.** Based on table 1, on the column of *Happiness* by class' ladder, it seems that the calculated F value is 0.114 with Sig  $0.892 \geq 0.05$ . It means that *happiness* has no difference based on class ladder.

On the column of *Happiness* by gender, it seems that calculated t for *happiness* is 0.455 with probability  $0.650 \geq 0.05$ . It means that women and men have no difference in *happiness*.

On the column of *Happiness* by age, it seems that the calculated F value of *happiness* is 2.355 with Sig  $0.05 \geq 0.05$ . It means that student's *happiness* is different based on age. If viewed on the aspects that may effect, there is significant differentiation in positive emotion and engagement aspects.

From table 2, the constanta shows that if there is no aspect of *Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships positive, Meaningfulness, and Achievement* in students, then, student's *happiness* in general is -0.018. The students' *happiness* on female and male in 10<sup>th</sup> class, respectively, is 0.035 and 0.03; female and male of 11<sup>th</sup> class, respectively, is -0.052 and 0.05; female and male of 12<sup>th</sup> class, respectively, is -0.034 and -0.04.

Based on table 3, it can be seen that the most affecting aspects of *Happiness* based on the coefficient determination is the aspect of *Engagement, Relationships positive, and Achievements*.

**Discussion.** Based on table 1, there was no difference in *happiness* based on class' ladder and gender. It is accordance with P. Oetami & K.W. Yuniarti (2012)'s research, which showed that there is no difference in male and female adolescent's happiness (Oetami & Yuniarti, 2012). When viewed from depression's level, based on research

of A. Fitriani & N. Hidayah (2012), showed that depression in female adolescent is higher than male, though still in the normal category (Fitriani & Hidayah, 2012).

Based on table 1 also, there is a difference of *happiness* based on age. This is due to the student's aging, in line with additioning of demands, duties and burdens which faced either from one self or anyone else, so physiological and psychological adjustment of the body is needed (Seyle, 1956; Matheny, Aycock & McCarty, 1993; and Parker, 2006). The results study of L. Chen *et al.* (2013) and Erica Valérie Bennett (2017) also showed that student's unhappiness occured due to their concerns in their bodies' flaws which in line with aging (Chen *et al.*, 2013; and Bennett, 2017).

Btari Indra Savitri (2012)'s research stated that the demands' addition of task and burden of the student, which do not comply with student's capacity, troubled with friends or get bored with the lessons, will result in pressure while in school (Savitri, 2012). The emotions experienced by the student relating to learning and achievement include tasks, self, and social. As the demands of attending classes, studying, working on tests and exams. In addition, the emotion at the age of 13-17 is "sturm and drang", marked by explosive emotion due to disagreements on the values of life (*cf* Hurlock, 2004; and Savitri, 2012).

So, it takes positive emotions in student's learning and achievement of academic challenges. Positive emotions, such as having a sense of happy in learning, having a curiosity, having a sense of love, and pride for being at the school, are needed so much in achieving happiness in learning (Fredrickson *et al.*, 2003; and Fredrickson, 2011).

This emotion is sometimes difficult for adolescents or people in the vicinity, but be beneficial when used to find the self's identity. The reaction of the people around them will be the experience for adolescents to determine what actions will they do

(Rosen *et al.*, 2010; and Felix, 2015).

The research organized by J.E. Zins *et al.* eds. (2004) stated that the competency of learning programs that include social-emotion can reinforce the development of attitudes and behavior in school (Zins *et al.* eds., 2004). Positive attitudes and behaviors have positive effect to engagement and commitment of the students in school. According to the research of I.W. Dharmayana (2012) and others, the higher the student's emotion competence is the higher the engagement or involvement of students in the school's activities (*cf* Fredrickson *et al.*, 2003; Fredrickson, 2011; and Dharmayana, 2012).

Student involvement would relate to the personality of the students, student's perceptions of instructional formats and subjects in school. The school requires vision, initiation, and commitment to create an environment, in which learning becomes more enjoyable, challenging, spontaneous, and important so that students feel the flow during the school day (Dharmayana, 2012; and Shernoff & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Teachers can make students involved in student's achievement by providing aid directly, creating a scene which support emotionally, facilitate positive involvement in the class activities, including protection from threats and physical abuse (Wentzel, Baker & Russell, 2012). It is expected that the student refers to attention in learning can communicate expectations and standards to achieve goal, reflecting the intrinsic motivation, and having a desire to continue to be involved with activities that are related to school's achievements (Wentzel *et al.*, 2010; Wentzel, 2012; and Wentzel, Baker & Russell, 2012).

Student's perceptions about the purpose and understanding their life is a process to search for meaning in life (Lopez *et al.*, 2000; Lopez & Snyder eds., 2009; and Steger, 2009 and 2012). Meaningfulness in learning includes the search for meaning in learning and search for meaning in life

(Steger, 2009 and 2012; and Wentzel, Baker & Russell, 2012).

Aspects of engagement, stickiness, and the commitment of the students against the school's activities and the development of positive students will reduced risky behavior and increasing student's achievement in academic (Dharmayana, 2012; and Wentzel, Baker & Russell, 2012). According to the results research of Diyah Ayu Dwijayanti (2014) and S. Mulyati (2014), the escalation of student's involvement through its demonstration of learning methods can improve their learning achievements (Dwijayanti, 2014; and Mulyati, 2014).

In addition, S. Sudarmi (2013)'s research stated that the escalation engagement through TAI (Team Assisted Individualization) strategy can increase the student's courage to ask, expressing their answer, and convey their opinions (*cf* Sudarmi, 2013; and Akdeniz, 2017).

Student's engagement and student's experience in learning are affected by their seat in class. Students who sat in the middle and behind have a low engagement, attention, and the quality of the learning experience, especially in students who often sat behind (Shernof *et al.*, 2017). The involvement is not only determined from experience that students feel in the class, but rather enjoyment, attention, active participation, but also class' preparation and knowledge of students about their learning expectation can be influencing and became the source of involvement in students (Trowler, 2010; and Shernof *et al.*, 2017).

Achievement's aspect could be defined as fullfilness, success or high level mastery which may be achieved in specific areas by the students. The more we aged, the less achievement aspect used to achieve happiness in students. Whereas, this aspect of achievement can be used in mastering student's skills, self-improvement, hardwork, and make yourself as references or task-oriented students. While ego-

oriented students, they will show their abilities which might be equal or more than the others (Agoes & Siti, 2003; Herawaty, 2015; and Stavrou *et al.*, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research that has been done there was no difference in happiness based on class' ladder and gender, and there were differences in average happiness based on age. The aspects that affect student happiness the most are positive emotion, engagement, and achievement aspects.

Based on the results of the study above, further research about methods of learning which concern in engagement aspects so the student's happiness while learning could increase is expected.<sup>1</sup>

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**Students, Learning, and Happiness**

(Source: <http://jarkasihshaq.blogspot.co.id>, 25/11/2017)

Education should bring happiness on the students itself as well as the environment. Creating happiness in education means engaging students to seek knowledge and competency with the challenges and struggles, so that the students are able to give values in difficult times and take values in learning. Happiness in learning will make the students totally involved both mental or psychic and physical.