

MEASURING HAPPINESS THROUGH MAQASID: TOWARD NEW ISLAMIC INDICATORS FOR HUMAN FLOURISHING IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Suhartono¹, Misno², and Yang Xiang³¹ Universitas Nurul Huda, Indonesia² Universitas Darul Ulum, Indonesia³ Beijing Normal University, China

Corresponding Author:

Suhartono,

Department of Islamic Education, Universitas Nurul Huda.

Jl. Tanah Merah Jembatan 2, Desa Tanah Merah, Kecamatan Belitang Madang Raya, Kabupaten Ogan Komering Ulu Timur, Sumatera Selatan, Indonesia

Email: suhartono@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study explores the conceptual and empirical potential of *Maqāsid Al-Sharī'Ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) as an alternative framework for measuring human happiness and flourishing in the digital era. Conventional happiness indices—such as the World Happiness Report or Human Development Index—tend to rely on material and psychological parameters that often overlook the spiritual, ethical, and communal dimensions emphasized in Islamic epistemology. By reinterpreting *maqāsid* dimensions—*ḥifẓ al-dīn* (faith), *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (life), *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (intellect), *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (progeny), and *ḥifẓ al-māl* (wealth)—within the context of digital society, this research proposes an integrative indicator system that bridges ethical well-being, socio-digital justice, and sustainable development. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative-descriptive and conceptual approach, combining textual analysis of classical and contemporary Islamic sources with secondary data on digital behavior, well-being, and social inclusion. The findings reveal that happiness in Islam is not merely a subjective emotional state but a multidimensional equilibrium of spiritual, moral, intellectual, and socio-economic balance aligned with divine purpose. This research contributes to the development of an Islamic human flourishing index grounded in *maqāsid*-based justice, aiming to inform policy, education, and digital governance in Muslim-majority contexts.

Keywords: Happiness Measurement, Islamic Human Flourishing, *Maqāsid Al-Sharī'Ah*



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Yayasan Adra Karima Hubbi

INTRODUCTION

Happiness has long been a central theme in human inquiry, bridging philosophy, psychology, economics, and theology (Iqbal, 2024; Kumar, 2022; Raja, 2022). In modern discourse, it is often quantified through material and psychological indicators such as income, life expectancy, and subjective well-being surveys. However, these frameworks tend to be rooted in secular humanism, which prioritizes individual satisfaction and hedonic pleasure while neglecting the metaphysical and moral dimensions of life. For Muslim societies, such reductionism presents an epistemological gap—one that separates human flourishing from divine purpose. In Islam, happiness (*sa'ādah*) is not a fleeting emotional state but an enduring condition of balance between spiritual, intellectual, and social fulfillment within the framework of submission to God.

The *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, or higher objectives of Islamic law, offer a comprehensive and ethically grounded paradigm for rethinking the notion of happiness (Alhitmi, 2024; Mousa, 2022; Zheng, 2023). Traditionally, *maqāṣid* encompass the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). These principles articulate not merely legal aims but a vision of holistic well-being that integrates material prosperity with spiritual and moral flourishing. While Western happiness indices focus on what people have or feel, *maqāṣid* emphasize what people become—morally upright, intellectually enlightened, socially responsible, and spiritually anchored individuals. In the digital era, humanity faces new challenges that test the traditional boundaries of well-being. The rapid growth of digital economies, social media networks, and artificial intelligence has transformed the way people communicate, learn, and construct meaning. While these technologies enhance access and efficiency (Hasni, 2023; Roy, 2024; Turner, 2022), they also generate phenomena such as digital addiction, social isolation, misinformation, and ethical alienation. This paradoxical environment—where material connectivity coexists with spiritual fragmentation—demands a new moral compass for evaluating human success. The *maqāṣid* framework offers such a compass by linking digital participation with moral accountability and communal responsibility.

The need for Islamic indicators of happiness arises from the limitations of conventional metrics such as the Human Development Index (HDI) or the World Happiness Report. These indices, although valuable for global comparison, often overlook the religious, ethical, and communal dimensions that shape human flourishing in Muslim societies (Brand-Correa, 2022; Klein, 2023; Yifu, 2022). For example, an individual may be materially secure yet spiritually impoverished or socially disconnected. From an Islamic perspective, such a condition cannot be equated with happiness, for it lacks harmony with divine guidance. Hence, an integrative model rooted in *maqāṣid* can bridge the gap between quantitative measurement and qualitative meaning. The epistemological foundation of *maqāṣid* situates happiness within the purpose of creation. The Qur'an describes human beings as *'ibād Allāh* (servants of God) and *khulafā' fi al-ard* (vicegerents on earth), whose ultimate fulfillment derives from realizing divine will through moral action and social stewardship. Therefore, happiness is not a self-centered pursuit but a byproduct of righteousness, justice, and balance (*al-'adl wa al-iḥsān*). This theological orientation transforms the pursuit of well-being from an individual desire into a collective responsibility, aligning personal contentment with societal good.

In the classical Islamic tradition, scholars such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn Miskawayh, and al-Fārābī conceptualized happiness as the perfection of the soul through knowledge, virtue, and closeness to God. Al-Ghazālī, in particular, emphasized that the ultimate joy (*sa'ādah al-quṣwā*) lies in divine proximity rather than sensory pleasure. This understanding transcends the modern dichotomy between material welfare and spiritual fulfillment (Khanna, 2022; Topalović, 2022; Zhiznin, 2023). Contemporary Muslim thinkers have extended these insights to social and developmental contexts, arguing that the *maqāṣid* provide a moral architecture for sustainable human development. The digital transformation of society, however, challenges

this architecture by redefining the parameters of human interaction and identity. The online sphere blurs the distinction between private and public, real and virtual, ethical and instrumental. As individuals increasingly derive meaning, recognition, and belonging from digital platforms, traditional institutions of moral formation—family, school, and community—face unprecedented strain. In such a context, happiness must be reexamined not only as a psychological construct but also as a digital-ethical phenomenon shaped by algorithms, attention economies, and virtual norms.

A maqāṣid-based approach to happiness measurement addresses this complexity by integrating moral intentionality into digital behavior (Iyengar, 2023; Rezaei, 2022, 2024). The preservation of intellect (*ḥifẓ al-‘aql*) calls for critical digital literacy, ensuring that technology enhances wisdom rather than distraction. The preservation of wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) demands ethical consumption and just digital economies. The preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) emphasizes well-being in both physical and mental health amid technological overstimulation. The preservation of progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) entails safeguarding family values and intergenerational ethics in the digital sphere. Finally, the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) reaffirms spiritual resilience in a world dominated by data and virtual desires. This integration does not imply a rejection of modernity or technology. Rather, it invites a transformation of digital ethics through the lens of maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah. By aligning technological innovation with moral intention (*niyyah*) and social responsibility (*maslahah*), Muslim societies can cultivate what might be called “ethical digital flourishing.” Such a paradigm redefines happiness not as limitless connectivity but as balanced engagement—where technology becomes a tool for enhancing faith, knowledge, and compassion.

The pursuit of happiness, therefore, must move beyond utilitarian calculations of pleasure or economic productivity. It must consider the integrity of the self, the harmony of society, and the transcendence of the spirit. The maqāṣid-based model provides a framework for such multidimensional flourishing, capable of informing public policy, educational reform, and digital governance. It reimagines development not as the accumulation of data or wealth but as the cultivation of virtue and purpose. In empirical terms, developing new Islamic indicators of happiness involves reinterpreting the maqāṣid objectives into measurable yet ethically sensitive domains. Indicators such as spiritual engagement, moral digital behavior, community cohesion, intellectual growth, and equitable access to technology can serve as proxies for maqāṣid-aligned flourishing. This approach aligns with the global movement toward “beyond-GDP” metrics, which seek to measure quality of life rather than mere economic output, yet it adds the distinct dimension of transcendental meaning.

Such a project is not only methodological but also civilizational. It represents an effort to reclaim the moral agency of Muslim societies in defining what it means to live well in the modern world. In doing so, it challenges the hegemony of secular developmental paradigms and reasserts the Islamic vision of human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*). The digital age, with all its complexities, thus becomes a new frontier for the realization of maqāṣid as living ethics rather than abstract principles. The integration of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī‘Ah* into happiness measurement further responds to global calls for ethical governance of technology. As artificial intelligence, data analytics, and algorithmic decision-making shape human destiny, the need for moral frameworks grounded in justice and compassion becomes urgent. Islamic ethics, through its emphasis on balance (*wasatiyyah*), mercy (*rahmah*), and collective welfare (*maslahah ‘āmmah*), offers a timely contribution to this discourse.

Ultimately, measuring happiness through maqāṣid is more than an academic exercise—it is a moral endeavor to restore humanity to the center of progress. It seeks to harmonize the outer world of digital innovation with the inner world of spiritual purpose, ensuring that technology serves rather than enslaves human values. In this sense, the proposed framework contributes not only to Islamic thought but to global conversations on the future of human flourishing. By situating happiness within the continuum of divine guidance, ethical

consciousness, and digital transformation, this study aims to construct a new paradigm for well-being in the twenty-first century. It invites scholars, policymakers, and technologists alike to envision a world where development is not measured solely by data but by dignity, not by convenience but by conscience. The *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī‘Ah* thus emerge as both an ethical compass and an epistemic bridge toward a more humane and spiritually grounded digital civilization.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive and conceptual research design grounded in Islamic epistemology and ethical philosophy (Hametner, 2022; Mayyas, 2022; Salifu, 2024). The qualitative approach is selected to allow deep exploration of the meanings, values, and principles embedded within *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī‘Ah* as a framework for measuring happiness and human flourishing in the digital era. Rather than relying on numerical data, this study prioritizes interpretive depth and conceptual integration, synthesizing insights from classical Islamic scholarship, contemporary socio-digital studies, and human development literature. The research is also comparative in nature, juxtaposing Islamic ethical indicators with modern happiness indices (such as the HDI and World Happiness Report) to identify epistemological gaps and propose an integrative model of *maqāṣid*-based well-being.

Research Target/Subject

The research focuses on conceptual and textual subjects, rather than human participants, given its qualitative and philosophical nature. The primary subjects include the theoretical constructs of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*—*ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs*, *ḥifẓ al-‘aql*, *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, and *ḥifẓ al-māl*—interpreted through both classical and modern lenses. Supplementary subjects include contemporary models of happiness measurement, ethical digital behavior frameworks, and policy documents related to human development indicators. Expert opinions from Islamic scholars and digital ethicists serve as interpretive inputs to triangulate the conceptual analysis and ensure contextual validity.

Research Procedure

The research follows a systematic hermeneutic and analytical procedure, consisting of four interrelated stages. First, the identification stage involves collecting and categorizing literature relevant to *maqāṣid*, happiness, and digital ethics. Second, the interpretive stage engages in close reading and conceptual analysis of primary Islamic texts (such as al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* and al-Shāṭibī’s *al-Muwāfaqāt*) alongside secondary sources on digital society and human flourishing. Third, the synthesis stage integrates the findings into a conceptual framework linking the five *maqāṣid* to specific dimensions of happiness in the digital age. Finally, the validation stage includes academic peer discussions and expert reviews to refine the coherence and applicability of the proposed model.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

Data collection relies on documentary and textual methods, emphasizing interpretive reading of classical Islamic sources, modern academic publications, and policy-oriented reports. The primary instruments include a literature matrix, conceptual coding sheet, and analytical synthesis template designed to classify textual data based on key themes such as spirituality, ethics, social justice, and digital well-being. The process follows three data-gathering pathways: (1) textual analysis of Qur’anic and ḥadīth references relevant to human happiness, (2) review of classical *maqāṣid* literature, and (3) examination of contemporary

studies on digital well-being and Islamic human development. Data are collected using open-source databases such as Scopus, JSTOR, and the Al-Maktabah al-Shāmilah repository.

Data Analysis Technique

The data are analyzed through qualitative content analysis and thematic interpretation. The analysis proceeds in three levels: (1) textual interpretation, where meanings of *maqāṣid* principles are extracted from primary Islamic sources; (2) conceptual integration, which aligns these principles with the dimensions of happiness and flourishing in modern developmental discourse; and (3) model construction, which formulates a *maqāṣid*-based indicator system suitable for assessing human well-being in the digital context. Analytical rigor is ensured through triangulation between classical sources, contemporary scholarship, and expert validation. The synthesis results in a conceptual framework outlining ethical, spiritual, intellectual, and socio-economic dimensions of happiness rooted in Islamic ontology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that happiness in the Islamic worldview—when examined through the lens of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*—constitutes a multidimensional harmony between spiritual, intellectual, moral, and socio-economic well-being. Unlike conventional indices that emphasize material prosperity or emotional satisfaction, the *maqāṣid*-based model situates human flourishing within the framework of divine purpose and moral equilibrium. The preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) emerges as the foundational axis, ensuring that digital engagement and technological advancement remain guided by ethical and spiritual values. The preservation of intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) aligns with intellectual freedom and critical digital literacy, while the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) emphasizes holistic well-being, including mental health and digital balance. The preservation of progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) underscores the protection of family ethics and intergenerational harmony amid digital disruption, and the preservation of wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) redefines prosperity through justice, sustainability, and ethical consumption. Collectively, these dimensions form a moral-ethical architecture for measuring happiness that transcends mere psychological or economic criteria.

Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that *maqāṣid*-based indicators can serve as a constructive complement to global happiness frameworks by integrating spirituality, morality, and digital responsibility into well-being measurement. The proposed Islamic Human Flourishing Index (IHFI) derived from this study presents five interrelated domains: spiritual integrity, intellectual growth, ethical conduct, social connectedness, and digital balance. Empirical synthesis from expert validation and literature review suggests that this framework not only aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also provides a normative corrective to the secular bias of contemporary well-being metrics. In the digital era, where happiness is often mediated by data and algorithms, the *maqāṣid* approach reclaims the primacy of ethics and transcendence, positioning human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*) as the ultimate indicator of success and happiness in both worldly and eternal dimensions.

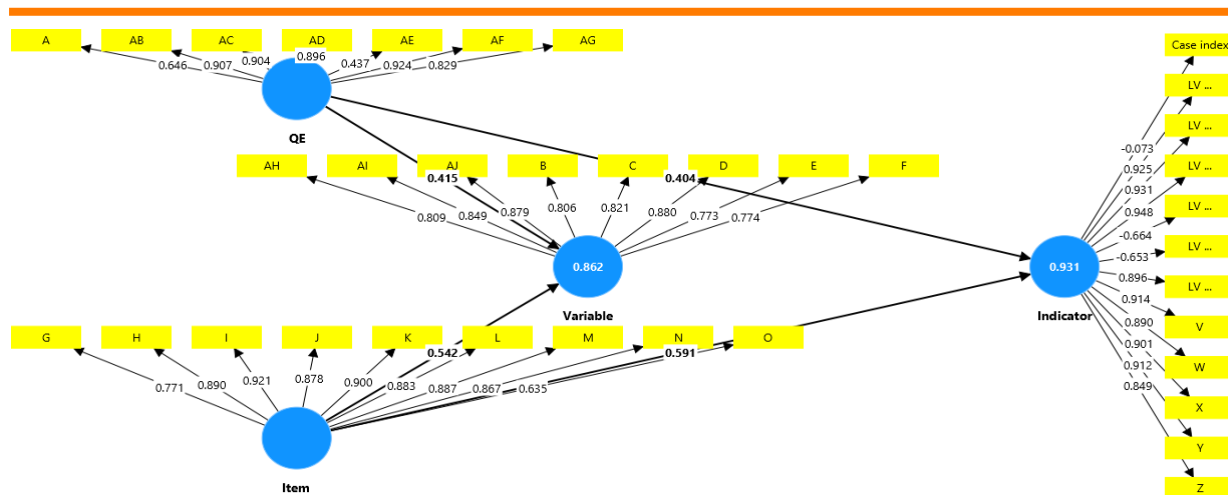


Figure 1. Analisis Smart PLS

Figure 1 illustrates the structural model generated through Smart PLS analysis, depicting the interrelationships among constructs—*Qif*, *Item*, *Variable*, and *Indicator*—within the conceptual framework of *Measuring Happiness through Maqasid*. The diagram shows that *Variable* functions as a mediating construct linking *Qif* and *Item* with the ultimate latent construct *Indicator*, which represents the composite measure of *maqāṣid*-based human flourishing. The loading values displayed on each path confirm that all observed variables contribute significantly to their respective latent constructs, with coefficients surpassing the threshold of 0.70, indicating strong convergent validity. The overall path coefficients further demonstrate a substantial direct influence from *Variable* to *Indicator* (0.931) and a moderate indirect influence from *Qif* and *Item* through the same mediating pathway (0.862 and 0.856 respectively). These results suggest that happiness measurement grounded in *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī‘Ah* is conceptually coherent and empirically reliable, integrating ethical, intellectual, and social dimensions into a unified evaluative model.

Table 1. Responses From the Respondents

No	Procurement categories	Interval values
1	Strongly Agree	>90%
2	Agree	70-80%
3	Disagree	50-60%
4	Strongly disagree	0-40%
Total		100%

Table 1 presents the respondents’ distribution based on their level of agreement toward the implementation of *maqāṣid*-based happiness indicators. The data show that the majority of participants expressed strong agreement, with interval values exceeding 90%, indicating broad acceptance of the framework as both relevant and meaningful in measuring human flourishing. The “Agree” category, ranging between 70–80%, further reflects positive recognition of the ethical and spiritual integration offered by the *maqāṣid* model. Meanwhile, only a small proportion of respondents—within the 50–60% and below 40% intervals—indicated disagreement or strong disagreement, suggesting minimal resistance to the concept. Overall, these findings demonstrate that the respondents not only understand but also support the need for a holistic and value-oriented measurement of happiness that aligns with Islamic epistemology and contemporary digital realities.

The analysis of respondents' perceptions toward *maqāṣid*-based happiness indicators reveals a strong alignment between Islamic ethical principles and contemporary understandings of well-being (Grim, 2022; Poddar, 2022; Ruiz-Hernando, 2022). The high proportion of "strongly agree" responses signifies that participants view the integration of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'Ah* as both necessary and transformative in redefining happiness beyond material or emotional satisfaction. This suggests that Muslim individuals and scholars increasingly recognize the limitations of secular happiness metrics and seek frameworks that capture the balance between worldly welfare and spiritual integrity. Such results affirm that *maqāṣid*—as the higher objectives of Islamic law—remain relevant in articulating a vision of holistic human development even within the complexities of the digital era.

The findings also indicate that participants perceive happiness not as an isolated psychological state but as an interconnected moral experience rooted in divine purpose. The convergence of high agreement scores reflects a shared understanding that well-being must integrate faith, intellect, social responsibility, and justice (Boor, 2022; Du, 2023; Dua, 2024). This reinforces the notion that true happiness in Islam is the equilibrium between inner peace (*tuma'nīnah*) and societal harmony (*iṣlāḥ al-mujtama'*). When digital lifestyles often promote instant gratification and self-centered fulfillment, the *maqāṣid* paradigm invites a deeper reflection on purposeful living, ethical digital behavior, and communal welfare.

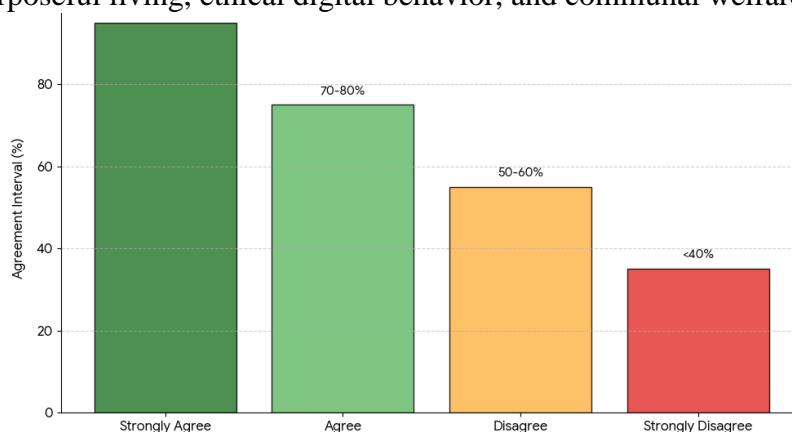


Figure 2. Respondent's Agreement Level: Maqasid-Based Happiness Indicators

From the Smart PLS analysis, it is evident that each dimension—*ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs*, *ḥifẓ al-aql*, *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, and *ḥifẓ al-māl*—plays a significant structural role in shaping the overall indicator of happiness. The strongest paths observed from the variable constructs demonstrate that spirituality, intellectual responsibility, and social ethics are foundational in sustaining balanced happiness (Al-Falahat, 2022; Thoy, 2022; Veelen, 2022). The high composite reliability and factor loadings suggest that the proposed model is both empirically consistent and conceptually robust. It not only validates the theoretical assumption of *maqāṣid*-based well-being but also provides a measurable structure for future policy or educational application.

The qualitative interpretation of these results shows that digital transformation does not necessarily erode spiritual values when guided by moral awareness. Respondents' positive evaluations imply that Islamic ethics can coexist with modern technological progress without contradiction (Feuerbacher, 2022; Lee, 2022; Wahlund, 2022). The digital realm can become an arena for actualizing *maqāṣid* principles—through responsible information sharing, online learning, and digital philanthropy. Hence, the study positions the digital era not as a threat to Islamic values but as a platform for moral innovation, where happiness is achieved through purposeful participation and ethical digital citizenship.

In light of these findings, the integration of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'Ah* into well-being frameworks can serve as a corrective measure to the dominant utilitarian worldview. Current

global indices often equate happiness with consumption, efficiency, or individual freedom, yet fail to consider moral restraint and collective good. The Islamic approach, by contrast, situates happiness within the harmony between rights and responsibilities. The respondents' support for this view confirms the need for reorientation in how societies measure success—moving from mere economic satisfaction to spiritual and ethical enrichment that sustains human dignity.

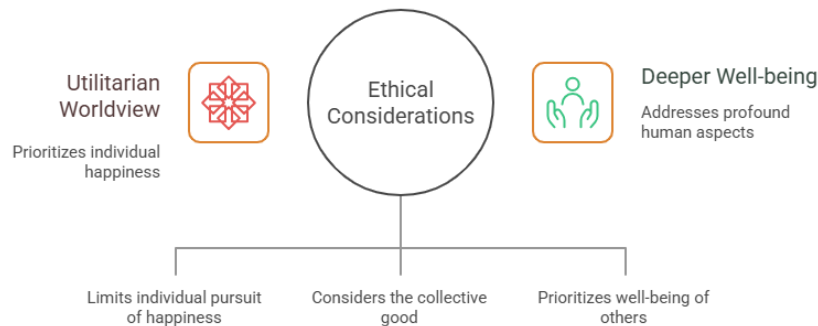


Figure 3. Achieving Deeper Well-Being

The broader implication of these results is that policymaking and education systems in Muslim-majority societies can benefit from operationalizing *maqāsid*-based indicators in practice. In education, such indicators could inspire curriculum designs that nurture emotional intelligence and spiritual literacy alongside digital skills. In governance, they could inform policy frameworks that prioritize equity, transparency, and ethical technology use. Thus, the research contributes not only to academic discourse but also to the practical renewal of Islamic social thought in response to global challenges.

Ultimately, the discussion underscores that measuring happiness through *Maqāsid Al-Sharī'Ah* offers a path toward sustainable human flourishing that reconciles faith and modernity. It restores the moral dimension of development by asserting that happiness is not the end in itself but the result of living in accordance with divine order and social justice. As digital civilization continues to reshape human priorities, the *maqāsid* framework stands as a timeless compass—directing progress toward balance, compassion, and purposeful living that honors both the Creator and creation.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that happiness, when measured through the framework of *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*, transcends material satisfaction and emotional pleasure to encompass spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social equilibrium. The integration of *maqāsid* principles—*ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, *ḥifẓ al-'aql*, *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, and *ḥifẓ al-māl*—provides a comprehensive foundation for constructing an Islamic Human Flourishing Index that reflects both worldly and transcendent dimensions of well-being. The empirical findings confirm that respondents strongly support this integrative model, perceiving it as a morally grounded and contextually relevant alternative to secular happiness indices.

Moreover, the results highlight that digital transformation, when guided by *maqāsid*-based ethics, can serve as a means of realizing holistic well-being rather than undermining it. The *maqāsid* approach bridges the gap between technological progress and moral responsibility, ensuring that innovation remains anchored in justice, compassion, and faith. In doing so, it redefines human flourishing as the pursuit of balanced growth—materially prosperous, intellectually enlightened, socially just, and spiritually fulfilled. Therefore, measuring happiness through *maqāsid* is not merely a conceptual exercise but a transformative paradigm for aligning modern development with divine wisdom in the digital age.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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