

**RELATIONSHIP CONTROL BETWEEN FIVE PRECEPTS PRACTICE AND ADULT HAPPINESS: THE EVIDENCE OF THE SURVEY IN VIETNAM**

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<http://doi.org/10.35409/IJBMER.2021.3306>

**ABSTRACT**

Vietnam is a country of religious diversity, in which Buddhism has the most significant participation. In addition to practicing the Five Precepts, many Vietnamese people have registered for active mindfulness meditation classes recently. This fact has received significant attention from scientists to add to the evidence of previous studies and enrich the research literature. This study explores the role of mindfulness meditation practice as a moderator of the relationship between five precepts practice and subjective perception well-being of Vietnamese adults. This study was conducted through a cross-sectional survey using an intentional sampling technique (n=200). Multivariable linear regression analysis and moderator regression were applied to prove the hypotheses. Research results show a positive and meaningful relationship between practicing mindfulness meditation, practicing the five precepts and feeling subjective happiness. In particular, mindfulness meditation acts as a moderating variable between the practice of the five precepts and the subjective feeling of happiness.

**Keyword:** Mindfulness, Five precepts, Happiness, Vietnamese adults.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Buddhism was present in Vietnam about 2000 years ago, based on absorbing influences from both India and China. Vietnamese Buddhism converges both Northern and Southern Buddhist lines and is influenced by three major sects of Northern Buddhism, namely Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism and Tantric Buddhism. At the same time, Vietnamese Buddhism is also influenced by Confucianism, Taoism, and folk customs, so it creates distinct features. Vietnamese Buddhism has a history of nearly two decades (Vietnam Buddhist Sangha Executive Council, 2013). Vietnamese Buddhists got 14.9% of the country's population (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2019).

Although with such a small number of Buddhists, mindfulness meditation is now very popular in Vietnam. Vietnamese people learn meditation thanks to the benefits that mindfulness

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meditation brings. Through mindfulness meditation courses, learners experience the process of self-reflection, self-introspection, and conscious action. Many Vietnamese find that practicing mindfulness meditation helps them form a philosophy of gracious living and gain wisdom of the mind. Many Vietnamese take mindfulness meditation courses because they see the benefits that meditation brings to them.

In recent years, there have been many studies on the benefits of mindfulness meditation for personal life. Mindfulness meditation enhances self-monitoring, self-awareness, reduces social anxiety, reduces depression, reduces neurosis, and promotes poor psychological well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003). in life (Kong, Wang & Zhao, 2014), effects on spiritual health and well-being promotion (Birnie et al., 2010), self-compassion, goodness, negative feelings and enhancement positive emotions (Singh, 2018), subjective well-being (Akin Ümran & Akin Ahmet, 2015), autonomous functioning in daily life, positive experiences in the present life (Brown & Ryan, 2003), life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, openness to experience, attention, reduced impulsivity and increased receptivity to experience (Brown & Ryan's, 2003).

For Vietnamese Buddhists, in addition to practicing meditation, practicing the five precepts (not killing, not stealing, not committing adultery, not lying, and not getting drunk and addicted) are reminded by pagodas and monks memorize and practice often.

There are very few studies on the relationship between mindfulness meditation practice and the five precepts. Several studies have found that the degree to which a Buddhist observes the five precepts and meditation is related to life satisfaction (Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2009), perceived happiness in life and healing (Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Ariyabuddhiphongs & Donnapat, 2010).

Happiness begins with not infringing upon themselves and infringing upon others. Perceived personal benefits mediate the relationship between adherence to the five precepts and subjective well-being (Ariyabuddhiphongs, Vanchai & Jaiwong, Donnapat, 2010).

Religion is positively and significantly associated with subjective well-being. The relationship between religion and subjective well-being for religious activity is more potent than for measures of religion (Witter et al. 1985).

After holding their breath slowly, look at their emotions and think carefully. Then we should try to deal with them calmly and thoroughly. It will help the practitioner make more informed decisions in all aspects of life. Finally, it would help if they persevered in daily practice to entirely experience the state of happiness in their minds.

Buddhist values teach an understanding of real life, such as life suffering (Fuderich, 2007), compassion (Kraft, 1992), and inner peace (Lee et al., 2013). It has been suggested that Buddhist thinking following these particular doctrines implies a shift from moral to aesthetic (Voyce, 2015).

While there have been many studies on the relationship between religion and life satisfaction or happiness (Hackney & Sanders, 2003), there seems to be no published research on the relationship between observance of the Five Precepts, personal wealth and happiness.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEWS**

### *Mindfulness:*

There are different views on mindfulness. Malinowski (2013) argues that the concept of "mindfulness" has roots in Buddhist teachings and is a Buddhist practice, along with faith, effort,

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concentration, and wisdom. Meanwhile, Langer (1989; 1992) suggested that mindfulness is a process of continuously drawing new and original distinctions between stimuli regardless of whether the current stimuli are perceived as trivial or essential. (Brown & Ryan, 2003) defines *mindfulness* as responsive attention and awareness of events and experiences as they occur in the present moment.

The mindfulness trait is thought to predict autonomous functioning in daily life, and the state of mindfulness is linked to the temporary and experiential positive influence of present life. More simply, mindfulness is responsive attention and awareness of events and experiences as they occur in the present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Alternatively, any experience derived from internal or external stimuli is perceived, recognized, and accepted without evaluation (Furthermore, Kabat-Zinn, 2003; 2008). Mindfulness is all about awareness, and of course, that includes the practice of meditation.

*Five Precepts:*

The Five Precepts refer to the basic Buddhist training of restraining body and speech by abstaining from life, from taking what is not given, from lust, lying, and consuming alcohol, the god of indulgence (Mahatthanadull & Mahatthanadull, 2018). The Five Precepts are the five prohibitions that Buddha invented to prevent evil thoughts, wrong speech, and unrighteous actions. The five commandments are: Do not kill; No theft or robbery; Do not commit adultery; Do not lie; Do not drink alcohol. These five things are practiced based on compassion and equality to eradicate individual sins and bring order and happiness to society. There are many studies on the five sexes. Khantipalo Bhikkhu (1994) argues that the five precepts are the moral code of Buddhism; by pledging to abide by the five prohibitions. Ariyabuddhiphongs (2009) states that observing the five precepts means committing to abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and idleness, and drinking and getting drunk; Meditation includes mindful attention to a breath or a walk (Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2009). The Five Precepts are the essence of all good qualities and the fulfillment of the higher stages of concentration and wisdom. It also promotes whatever sane state one already has (Soontaraporn Techapalokul, 2019).

*Happiness:*

There are two approaches to happiness, namely the hedonic approach, which focuses on happiness and therefore happiness is defined in terms of achieving pleasure and avoiding pain; and the eudaimonic approach, which focuses on meaning and self-perception and defines well-being in terms of the extent to which a person is fully functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Hedonism holds that happiness is the most tangible, being the joy we experience when performing rewarding activities, including seeking pleasure, perceiving emotional balance, maintaining satisfaction Satisfaction of life, the suppression of wants and needs, and happiness are short-term and intense (Delle Fave, Fausto, & Marta, 2011). In other words, happiness is about achieving pleasure and avoiding pain and about the extent to which an individual is fully functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Altruism (eudaimonia) holds that happiness is the point of seeking personal growth, achievement of goals and goals, effort and motivation, and lasting happiness (Delle Fave, Fausto, & Marta, 2011). According to Buddhism, happiness results from personal wealth: having wealth, using it, being free from debt, and engaging in a harmless profession (Ariyabuddhiphongs, Vanchai, & Donnapat, 2010).

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*Relationship between mindfulness and happiness:*

Many studies have found a positive relationship between mindfulness and happiness. Soontaraporn Techapalokul (2019) suggests that mindfulness has a positive relationship between mindfulness and positive emotions and life satisfaction (Zelikson, 2016) and self-happiness (Klussman, Curtin, Langer, & Nichols, 2020). Claire Crowley, Laura Ring Kapitula, & Dana Munk, 2020; Akin, Umran, Akin, & Ahmet, 2015).

Subjective happiness is positively predicted by mindfulness. Coping capacity is also based on mindfulness and subjective wellbeing (Akin, Umran, Akin, & Ahmet, 2015). Mindfulness can act as a potential mediator in the relationship between emotion regulation and happiness (Satchit Prasun Mandal, Yogesh Kumar Arya, & Rakesh Pandey, 2011). Mindfulness, which is associated with increased levels of happiness, is a mediator underlying this relationship; Meditation can lead to increased levels of mindfulness, which, in turn, can lead to increased levels of happiness (Sabrina Rose Teeter, 2016). Coping ability and subjective wellbeing are both positively predicted by mindfulness (Akin & Akin, 2015).

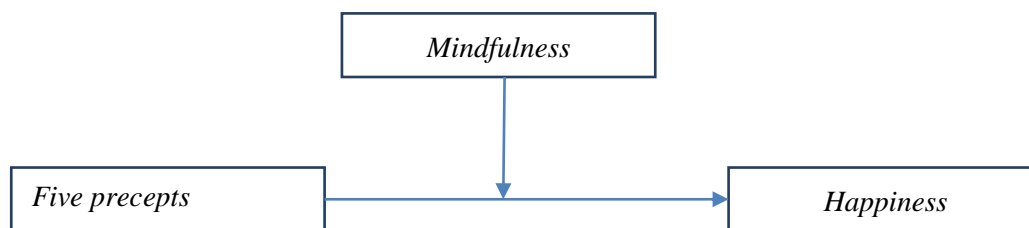
Mindfulness is also a moderator in the relationship between life satisfaction and mental wellbeing (Edelweiss Bester, Pravani Naidoo, & Anja Botha, 2016). Mindfulness and happiness appear to have a similar relationship (Hanley, Warner, & Garland, 2015).

*Relationship between the five precepts and happiness:*

Acceptance of happiness mediates the relationship between the five precepts and happiness (Ariyabuddhiphongs & Jaiwong, 2010). The Five Precepts benefit them to live a peaceful, harmonious life in society and a friendly manner (Ven. Nyanika, 2021; Kanda Pongpha & Pharamaha Chitnaretes Wuthidhammo, 2016), establishing internal relationships. Healthier minds, more efficient actions, and more peace of mind (Rick Hanson, 2009). *Buddhism* is defined as the extent to which a Buddhist engages in observance, adherence to the five precepts, and meditation, which are related to life satisfaction (Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2009).

The authors have built a research model about what from the research overview, as shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1.** The Research Model



**Hypotheses**

Based on the above documents, the following hypotheses have been formed:

H1. Mindfulness has a positive and meaningful relationship with happiness.

H2. The five precepts have a positive and meaningful relationship to happiness.

H3. The Five Pre-Relationships Between Mindfulness and Happiness.

**3. RESEARCH METHOD**

*Surveyed Area:*

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The study was conducted at pagodas and temples in Hanoi in March 2020. It has more than 200 temples and shrines. Participating in the survey are elderly Hanoians who have attended meditation courses at pagodas and mindfulness meditation centers. At the beginning of the year, everyone's habit goes to temples and pagodas to pray for peace and luck for the family and practice the five precepts.

*Research Samples and Methods:*

To carry out this study, the authors conducted a survey, collecting opinions of the study participants in two steps: preliminary investigation and formal investigation.

*Preliminary investigation:*

The research team used a qualitative method by in-depth interviews with educational and psychologist researchers to adjust the research scale and improve the questionnaire to suit the characteristics of the survey area close. The questionnaire was built based on the results of the research overview and experts' opinions, including two parts. Part 1 collects demographic information of study participants such as age, gender, and occupation, and Part 2 collects information about study participants, including the mindfulness practice results, the practice of the five precepts and the level of happiness. Part 2 examines information about practicing the five precepts, the results of practicing mindfulness, and feeling happy. Based on Ariyabuddhiphongs & Jaiwong's (2010) ideas, we build a measure of information gathering on five precepts by a questionnaire using the 5-point Linkert scale from 1. Strongly disagree with 5. Strongly agree on note: To get 10,000 USD, would they accept the following tasks? 1. Doing cattle slaughter for one year; 2. Sell their employer's secrets to a company that competes with the company they are working for; 3. Having sex with a stranger; 4. If given the opportunity, will give false information to a bank or a financial company so that someone can borrow 100,000 USD; 5. Drink alcohol every day for a year. Collection of information on mindfulness practice using the State Mindfulness Scale (SMS): MSM was developed by (Analayo 2004; Bodhi, 1993; Bishop et al., 2004), based on previous research on mindfulness concepts and related structures (e.g., Langer, 1989). Researchers (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Messick, 1995), Haynes, Richard, & Kubany, 1995), and more recently Galia Tanay & Amit Bernstein (2013), respectively, developed this measure. This measure includes two factors, State Mindfulness of Mind with 15 items and State Mindfulness of Body with six items. Because it did not match the study description, the State Mindfulness of Body factor was removed from the questionnaire. Collect information about feelings of happiness using The Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) developed by McGreal & Joseph (1993) with 25 items and then applied to research in many different areas of general health. of employed adults (Walsh, Joseph, & Lewis, 1995). Items belonging to negative factors were removed from the questionnaire because they did not match the research objectives.

The English questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese by two professional interpreters, and the translation process is carried out according to the rules for cross-cultural adaptation. A single Vietnamese version was created after discussion and consensus between the translators and the principal investigator. A professional bilingual expert in education contributed to this version to create a final version. This final version was pre-tested on 60 participants selected to represent the population by age, sex, and education level. During the assessment, participants were asked to complete this final version. Subsequently, the most beautiful, minor edits were made to improve the sentence structure of the guide for better understanding, and the final

Vietnamese version of the complete version was completed.

*Official investigation:*

A selection of students from universities in Hanoi participated in the study. They are the ones who have followed the mindfulness guidelines from instructors, monks, and experts on mindfulness practices. The questionnaire was sent directly to the respondents by the non-random sampling method. As a result, 200 good votes were obtained, achieving a response rate of 100% demographic information of study participants (Table 1).

**Table 1. Demographic characteristics of survey participants**

		Occupation							
		Manager		Small bussiness		Teacher		Worker	
		Coun t	Row N %	Coun t	Row N %	Coun t	Row N %	Coun t	Row N %
Age	23-30 years	22	34,9%	12	19,0%	16	25,4%	13	20,6%
	31-40 years	13	31,0%	7	16,7%	13	31,0%	9	21,4%
	41-50 years	8	17,0%	11	23,4%	12	25,5%	16	34,0%
	Above 50 years	12	25,0%	12	25,0%	9	18,8%	15	31,2%
Gender	Female	23	25,3%	17	18,7%	23	25,3%	28	30,8%
	Male	32	29,4%	25	22,9%	27	24,8%	25	22,9%
Education	Bachelor	15	25,4%	13	22,0%	17	28,8%	14	23,7%
	College	12	23,5%	9	17,6%	18	35,3%	12	23,5%
	Worker	28	31,1%	20	22,2%	15	16,7%	27	30,0%

**Research Results**

The R Programming language is used to analyze the reliability of the scale and the discovery factor. The analysis results suggest removing and merging some observed variables to help the scale evaluate concepts more accurately.

*Analyzing the Reliability of the Scales:*

They are testing the scales through Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient to identify and remove junk variables to avoid creating misleading factors when analyzing exploratory factor analysis. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient has a variable value in the interval [0,1]. If a measurement variable has a total correlation coefficient of Corrected Item - Total Correlation  $\geq 0.3$ , that variable meets the requirements (Cronbach, 1951; Taber, 2018). The verification criterion is that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient must be greater than 0.6, and the correlation coefficient of the sum variable in each scale must be greater than 0.3 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Table 2 shows that the scales of the factors are all standard. Therefore, all the scales of the factors are reliable and used for subsequent factor analysis.

**Table 2. Summary of Reliability and Relative Minimum Variables of Scales**

Scales	Number of variables observed	Reliability coefficients (Cronbach Alpha)	The correlation coefficient of the smallest total variable

Mindfulness	15	0.824	0.553
Five precepts	5	0.818	0.547
Happiness	16	0.842	0.651

After testing Cronbach's Alpha, the author uses exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to preliminary evaluate the scales' unidirectional, convergent, and discriminant values . EFA was used by extracting the Principal Components Analysis Factor and Varimax rotation to group the factors. With a sample size of 200, the factor loading factors of the observed variables must be greater than 0.5; variables converge on the same factor and are distinguished from other factors. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient (KMO), which is an index used to consider the adequacy of factor analysis, must be within  $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$  (Cronbach, 1951; Taber, 2018; Hair et al. ., 2009). The analysis results in Table 3 show that all factor loading coefficients of the observed variables are greater than 0.5; Bartlett test with Sig meaning. = 0.000 with KMO coefficient = 0.880. All 35 items using EFA were extracted into three factors with Eigenvalues greater than one and Cumulative variance percent = 0.54 (54%). Thus, the research model consisting of 2 independent variables and one dependent variable is used for linear regression analysis and subsequent hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Exploratory factor analysis results

Call: principal(r = data, nfactors = 3, rotate = "varimax")  
 Standardized loadings (pattern matrix) based upon correlation matrix

	item	RC1	RC2	RC3	h2	u2	com
Happy14	14	0.75			0.56	0.44	1.0
Happy5	5	0.74			0.57	0.43	1.1
Happy13	13	0.74			0.59	0.41	1.2
Happy7	7	0.73			0.59	0.41	1.2
Happy11	11	0.73			0.60	0.40	1.3
Happy9	9	0.73			0.59	0.41	1.2
Happy1	1	0.69			0.51	0.49	1.1
Happy4	4	0.69			0.53	0.47	1.2
Happy6	6	0.69			0.57	0.43	1.4
Happy2	2	0.66			0.53	0.47	1.4
Happy16	16	0.66			0.56	0.44	1.6
Happy3	3	0.65			0.54	0.46	1.6
Happy8	8	0.65			0.62	0.38	2.0
Happy10	10	0.63			0.53	0.47	1.6
Happy12	12	0.63			0.47	0.53	1.4
Happy15	15	0.62			0.51	0.49	1.7
Mindfulness3	19		0.77		0.63	0.37	1.1
Mindfulness1	17		0.74		0.59	0.41	1.1
Mindfulness11	27		0.72		0.54	0.46	1.1
Mindfulness7	23		0.70		0.53	0.47	1.2
Mindfulness14	30		0.70		0.54	0.46	1.2
Mindfulness8	24		0.69		0.53	0.47	1.3
Mindfulness15	31		0.68		0.47	0.53	1.0
Mindfulness6	22		0.67		0.52	0.48	1.3
Mindfulness9	25		0.66		0.49	0.51	1.3
Mindfulness2	18		0.66		0.44	0.56	1.0
Mindfulness10	26		0.66		0.50	0.50	1.3
Mindfulness12	28		0.63		0.43	0.57	1.2
Mindfulness5	21		0.62		0.44	0.56	1.3
Mindfulness13	29		0.58		0.46	0.54	1.7
Mindfulness4	20		0.56		0.37	0.63	1.3
Fiveprecepts5	36			0.75	0.64	0.36	1.3
Fiveprecepts2	33			0.73	0.59	0.41	1.2
Fiveprecepts4	35			0.73	0.61	0.39	1.3
Fiveprecepts3	34			0.67	0.59	0.41	1.6
Fiveprecepts1	32			0.60	0.48	0.52	1.7

	RC1	RC2	RC3
SS loadings	8.34	7.58	3.36
Proportion Var	0.23	0.21	0.09
Cumulative Var	0.23	0.44	0.54
Proportion Explained	0.43	0.39	0.17
Cumulative Proportion	0.43	0.83	1.00

Mean item complexity = 1.3

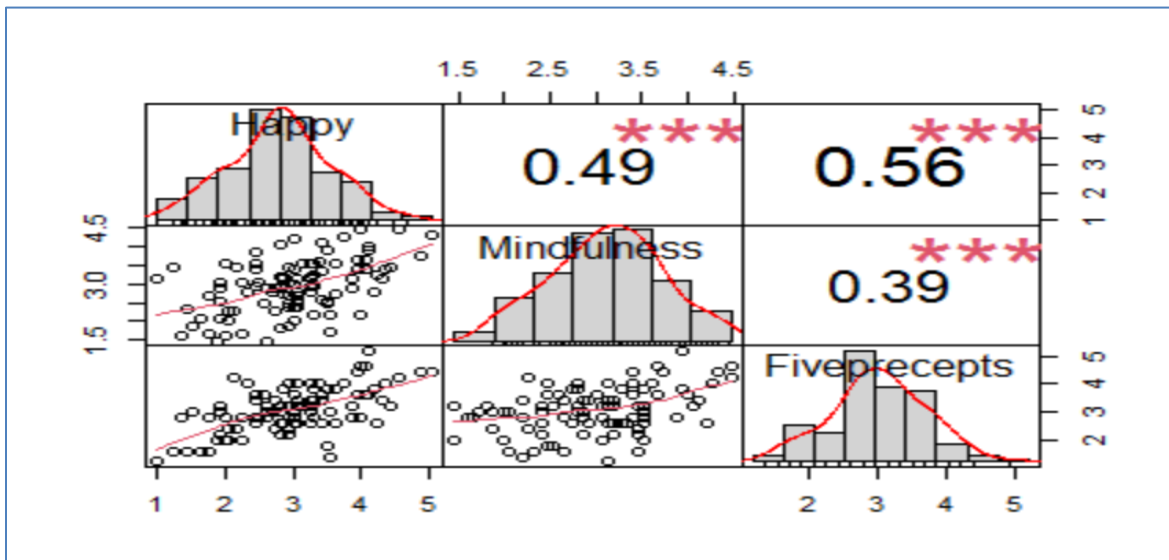
Test of the hypothesis that 3 components are sufficient.  
 The root mean square of the residuals (RMSR) is 0.05  
 with the empirical chi square 339.26 with prob < 1  
 Fit based upon off diagonal values = 0.98

*Pearson correlation analysis*

The author uses Pearson correlation analysis to analyze the correlation between quantitative variables. Figure 2 shows that, at the 5% level of significance, the correlation coefficient shows that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is statistically significant (Sig. < 0.05). The magnitude of the correlation coefficients ensures that multicollinearity does not occur. Therefore, other statistics can be used to verify the relationship between variables.



**Figure 2.** Pearson correlation analysis results



*Moderation regression analysis:*

Next, the research team analyzed Moderation regression Analysis to determine the Mindfulness variable that moderates the relationship between FivePrecepts and Happy variables. Table 4 shows that model1 has  $R^2 = 0.362$ , showing that the built linear regression model fits the dataset = 0.241%. The model shows that the two independent variables have no statistical significance on the dependent variable, and especially the Mindfulness variable moderates the relationship between FivePrecepts and Happy variables.

**Table 4. Moderation regression analysis**

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Dependent variable:	
Happiness	
<b>Mindfulness</b>	0.250** (0.098)
<b>Fiveprecepts</b>	0.406*** (0.095)
<b>Mindfulness : Fiveprecepts</b>	0.220** (0.102)
<b>Constant</b>	2.902*** (0.071)
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<b>Observations</b>	100
<b>R2</b>	0.362
<b>Adjusted R2</b>	0.342
<b>Residual Std. Error (df = 96)</b>	0.671
<b>F Statistic (df = 3; 96)</b>	18.157***
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<b>Note:</b>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4 shows that, with 95% confidence, the hypotheses proposed by the research team are accepted. Specifically, the FivePrecepts variable has the most substantial effect on the Happiness variable with  $\beta = 0.406$ , and the second is the Mindfulness variable with  $\beta = 0.250$ . The Mindfulness variable moderates the relationship between the FivePrecepts variable and the Happiness variable with  $\beta = 0.220$ , which means that the increase or decrease of the Mindfulness variable makes the relationship between the FivePrecepts variable and the Happiness variable also increase or decrease respectively.

*Discussion and Conclusion*

Research results show that practicing mindfulness has a positive and meaningful impact on happiness. This result is similar to the finding of Soontaraporn Techapalokul (2019); Zelikson (2016), Klussman, Curtin, Langer, & Nichols (2020), Claire Crowley, Laura Ring Kapitula, & Dana Munk (2020), Akin, Umran, Akin, & Ahmet (2015). Research results also show that practicing the five precepts has a positive and meaningful impact on happiness. This result is similar to the finding of Rick Hanson (2009); Along. Nyanika (2021); Kanda Pongpha & Pharamaha Chitnarettes Wuthidhammo (2016); Ariyabuddhiphongs (2009) argues that the five precepts are beneficial for them to live a peaceful, harmonious life in society and with a friendly manner, related to life satisfaction.

Research results also show that mindfulness practice mediates the practice of the five precepts and feelings of happiness. This finding is similar to Sabrina Rose Teeter (2016), who suggested that mindfulness is associated with increased happiness levels, which is a mediator underlying this relationship; Meditation can lead to increased levels of mindfulness which, in turn, can lead to increased levels of happiness.

From the above results, it can be concluded that religious ritual practice has a significant relationship with subjective happiness. The degree of participation in religious practice is related to life satisfaction and life direction as it creates a sense of meaning and stimulates hope and optimism (Worthington, Kurusu, and McCullough) (1996). Buddhists practise the five precepts

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to receive "warm light," happiness and make spiritual life more meaningful.

#### **4. LIMITATIONS**

As with other empirical studies, there are limitations to this study that should be considered when discussing the results. First, our survey method reflects the respondents' subjective perception of the questions being investigated. Subjective data has some inherent disadvantages that are hard to avoid in surveys (Pakpour, Gellert, Asefzadeh, Updegraff, Molloy & Sniehotta, 2016). Our data is collected over a single period of productional data that does not allow a dynamic assessment of changes in students' intentions and related behaviours regarding their college admissions, affecting their applicability (Xin, Liang, Zhanyou, & Hua, 2019). Future research should combine cross-sectional and longitudinal studies.

The intentional sampling method has certain limitations, not fully reflecting population characteristics (Lin et al., 2016; Strong et al., 2018). Our survey was conducted within a cultural context of Vietnam and therefore requires more general statements that can be made by applying the development research model and research conclusions to other countries and cultures (Sun et al., 2012).

#### **5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Hanoi University of Home Affairs funded this research. The author sincerely thanks the student community of Hanoi University of Home Affairs for supporting the survey.

#### **Conflict of interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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