

DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO RAISE PETS AND PLANTS AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

During the Covid-19 pandemic, people experienced many changes in their daily lives. These changes trigger stress and lead to depression in the community, especially among young adults, which is the main axis that leads to low subjective well-being. Various studies have shown that raising pets (dogs and cats) and plants (gardening) can improve an individual's subjective well-being. The study used a qualitative descriptive method with 10 subjects divided into three groups, namely the group of pets, the group of plants (gardening), and the group of pets and plants (gardening). All subjects in the three groups showed high subjective well-being through raising pets and plants (gardening) during the Covid-19 pandemic. All subjects show positive emotions and enjoyed raising pets and plants (gardening). In addition, most of the subjects also felt satisfied with their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic with the presence of pets and plants (gardening). All subjects felt the presence of pets as entertainers to provide motivation. For the subjects, plants (gardening) play a similar role, through the beauty and growth of the plants.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, subjective well-being, young adults, pet, plants.

1. PREFACE

During the Covid-19 pandemic, most people, especially young adults, experienced prolonged stress to the point of suicidal thoughts [1], [2]. These feelings and thoughts indicate that young adults have low subjective well-being. To improve the subjective well-being of young adults during the Covid-19 pandemic, some people have begun to adapt and find various interests that can be done at home. Kinds of activities that can be enjoyed while at home include keeping pets and plants (gardening) [3], [4].

The activity of keeping pets has begun to attract attention and foster interest in people's lives, which is known to have a positive impact on individuals ranging from having friends to spend time with to the formation of close relationships between individuals and pets like family members [5]. Furthermore, cultivating plants (gardening) also attracts the attention of individuals with activities that provide various benefits while filling their spare time at home [3].

Related Work

Research conducted by Xin et al. [6] reported that pets can improve subjective well-being and have a positive psychological effect on their owners. Also found by Wenden et al. [7] that activities with pets can have a positive impact on the physical and socio-emotional conditions of individuals. The positive impacts experienced include increasing body movement activities, increasing prosocial behavior, and helping to reduce the possibility of behavioral disorders to overall difficulty in children [7].

In addition, pet dogs can also help reduce anxiety, improve self-esteem and provide social support for students during their studies [8], [9]. The effects are applied through interacting with or seeing their pets. In addition, physical interaction with pets can affect the emotional state of individuals, such as increasing feelings of comfort, relaxation, and positive reciprocal feelings. This feeling is obtained by individuals through direct contact with their pets such as stroking, hugging, or just sitting on the owner's lap [10].

Cleary et al. [11] revealed that pets such as cats and dogs can improve individual mental health conditions and influence individual behavior in a more positive direction. Improved mental state and positive changes in the individual can occur due to the establishment of an emotional bond with their pet. Through the establishment of emotional bonds, individuals consider pets as part of their family or their children [11].

Other forms of mental health improvement include reducing feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety, as experienced in veteran soldiers with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) [12]. Research in Indonesia also found that pets provide benefits for individuals such as reducing stress levels in employees [13]. In line with that, Tribudiman et al. [14] stated that individuals can have their own happiness through emotional attachment to their pets.

Apart from keeping pets, the activities of maintaining plants (gardening) are also starting to attract people's attention. This activity is an option for some people to entertain and keep themselves busy during the Covid-19 pandemic [3]. Being in nature, observing, and doing activities in a green environment can have a positive impact on individuals. These include improvement in the psychological condition of individuals and recovery from psychological disorders [15], [16].

The interaction between the individual and the green environment is mediated by the improvement in the individual's five senses such as the sense of smell, touch, and sight [16]. This helps individuals become more responsive and sensitive to the surrounding environment, which is the beginning for individuals to realize new things and focus on things that bring positive emotions such as relaxation, calm, and satisfaction when watching plant growth [17].

The activity of maintaining plants (gardening) can also be an alternative to releasing stress experienced by individuals by being outdoors, whereas individuals who live in cities spend more time in closed spaces [18]. In line with this, research conducted in America [19] showed that cultivating plants (gardening) that is done alone or with a company can increase personal well-being or individual happiness during the Covid-19 pandemic. Conditions of increasing personal well-being such as feeling happy and having a new purpose in life through the formation of meaningfulness gardening for individuals.

Following these results, several studies [20], [21], [17] show that plant nurturing activities (gardening) can make a positive contribution to individuals in the form of (a) increasing well-being, (b) helping reduce stress, (c) increase life satisfaction and positive feelings in the individual, and (d) have a positive impact on the social life and physical health of individuals. The activity of maintaining plants (gardening) also helps individuals improve their lives, such as being calmer, more patient, and able to use their thinking abilities optimally [22].

Not only that, Lehgerger et al. [23] showed that individuals who gardened felt higher positive emotions and life satisfaction than people who did not garden. Expressions of positive emotions

and satisfaction with their life can be seen through feeling calm, joy, productivity, unfolding creativity, adding family time, and freedom. Sides of the human-pet relationship showed that support from their pets can improve overall individual subjective well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic. By lessening psychological stress and feelings of social isolation due to Covid-19 [24].

Various benefits of keeping pets and plants (gardening) include decreasing negative emotions such as stress, and even depression. On the other hand, individuals feel calm and comfortable while keeping pets and plants (gardening). It is also revealed that keeping pets and plants (gardening) can give individuals a feeling of satisfaction with their lives. This indicates subjective well-being which is a condition where individuals feel more positive emotions than negative emotions and feel satisfied with their lives in all aspects [25].

However, research by Defelipe et al. [26] found that there was no significant difference in the life satisfaction of individuals who kept or did not keep pets. Supporting these results, Phillipou et al. [27] also revealed that the presence of pets amid the Covid-19 pandemic reduces the quality of life of individuals. Similarly, it was found that the activity of maintaining plants (gardening) did not have a major impact on reducing stress or anxiety levels in individuals [22]. Koay and Dillon [20] also showed that there was no significant difference in the level of stress and self-esteem of individuals who did or did not carry out plant-keeping activities (gardening).

Therefore, further research was conducted to understand in depth the positive impact of keeping pets and plants (gardening) on individuals. Specifically, the study will look at the subjective well-being of young adults who keep pets and plants (gardening) amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our Contribution

Contributes to expanding and enriching knowledge in human-animal research, horticulture research, and clinical-social psychology research. By providing an in-depth description of the subjective well-being of individuals who keep pets, and care for plants (gardening), as well as those who raise pets and care for plants (gardening). Become a reference and alternative in helping to improve subjective well-being amid the Covid-19 pandemic. As well as a means of information and education sources regarding the contribution of pets and plants (gardening) to human life, especially to the subjective well-being of individuals.

Paper Structures

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the preliminaries used in this paper, including the well-being of individuals who keep pets and/or care for plants (gardening). Section 3 presents the methods used in conducting the research and the description of the subjects in the research. Section 4 describes the subjective well-being of 10 subjects who keep pets and/or care for plants. Lastly, section 5 concludes the paper and suggestions for future research and the community.

The activity of raising pets and plants (gardening) provides many positive impacts physically and psychologically for individuals. One positive impact is providing subjective well-being or happiness to the individual [6], [19], [23], [24]. According to Diener [25], subjective well-being is a condition where individuals feel more positive emotions than negative emotions and feel satisfied with their lives in all aspects.

Individuals with pets and plants (gardening) received subjective well-being or happiness through interaction and by building an individual attachment to their pets and plants (gardening). Through the attachment they have with each activity, the individual can feel loved which leads to positive feelings and satisfaction with their life.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods that focus on finding answers from events or experiences that have not been understood through the experiences of the informants [28]. Sampling uses a purposive sampling method with convenience sampling. The study began by looking for subjects through poster distribution along with a google form link to record individuals who matched the criteria of research subjects and were willing to become subjects in the study.

The criteria for research subjects are, (a) male or female with an age range of 20 years to 40 years; (b) keeping pets and plants (gardening) since the pandemic started; (c) keeping pets and plants (gardening) on daily basis; (d) the type of pet is a dog or cat; and (e) whether the plants (gardening) that are kept include ornamental plants (leaves or flowers) or consumption plants (vegetables or fruits). After successfully collecting 10 subjects, the researcher began to arrange an interview schedule with each subject.

The description of the subjects in the pets group can be seen in Table 1. The descriptions of the subjects in the plants (gardening) group can be seen in Table 2. Descriptions of the subjects in both groups can be seen in Table 3. The study started with interviewing 10 subjects through Zoom Meeting. After the data is obtained, it is processed using thematic techniques.

Table 1

Description of Subjects Who Keep Pets

Subjects	A	B	C
Gender	Female	Female	Male
Age	22 years old	22 years old	21 years old
Place and Date of Birth	Jakarta, 13 April 2000	Jakarta, 29 March 2000	Batang Kuis, 23 October 2000
Address	Jakarta	Jakarta	Banten
Religion	Christian	Catholic	Catholic
Ethnicity	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
Position in family	Eldest child of two	Eldest child of two	Sole child
Status	Employed	Working while studying	Working while studying
Last Education	High School	High School	High School

Table 2

Description of the Subject who Care for Plants (Gardening)

Subjects	F	G	H	I
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	34 years old	32 years old	21 years old	28 years old
Place and Date of Birth	Jakarta, 11 June 1987	Lamongan, 26 August 1989	Jakarta, 27 December 2000	Purwokerto, 1 March 1994
Address	Jakarta	Lamongan	Riau Islands	Surabaya
Religion	Catholic	Islam	Buddha	Islam
Ethnicity	Chinese	Javanese	Chinese	Javanese
Position in family	Youngest child of two	Sole child	Second child of three	Second child of three
Status	Employed	Employed	Student	Employed
Last Education	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	High School	Bachelor's degree

Table 3

Description of the Subject who Keep Pets and Care for Plants (Gardening)

Subjects	K	L	M
Gender	Female	Female	Male
Age	23 years old	37 years old	20 years old
Place and Date of Birth	Jakarta, 28 August 1998	Bandung, 13 June 1985	Tinombo, 28 December 2001
Address	Jakarta	Bandung	Tinombo
Religion	Buddha	Islam	Islam
Ethnicity	Tionghoa	Jawa	Buol + Toli-Toli
Position in family	Eldest child of three	Eldest child of two	Youngest child of two
Status	Student	Employed	Student
Last Education	High School	Bachelor's degree	High School

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Subjects who were divided into three groups raising pets, caring for plants (gardening), and keeping pets and plants (gardening) felt positive emotions that were more dominant than negative emotions during their daily lives. Positive emotions that arise when spending time with pets and plants (gardening) are happy, calm, excited, peaceful, and looking forward to living their daily lives. In the cognitive dimension, all subjects in the three groups were satisfied with their lives after keeping pets and plants (gardening).

Subjects Who Keep Pets

Starting with the subjects in the pet group, subject A who keeps a pet dog feels more dominant positive emotions, such as happiness and excitement than negative emotions while being with their pet dog. Subject A has considered the presence of a pet dog as a mood booster in their daily life. While being with a pet dog, subject A finds joy in simple things.

In addition, subject A also feels satisfied and enjoys their current life which has experienced many positive changes after owning a pet dog. The changes include being more comfortable at home and interacting with family members more. The presence of a pet dog helped subject A to be able to enjoy a life full of activities. Not only that but subject A learned many things through the presence of their pet dog. These include being responsible, patient, and good at managing finances.

The joy is that every day it does something that makes me happy. .. like it can make made your day like that. ..like puppy eyes, how cute is it, or sometimes it's stuck, but while licking, licking your feet, it's like being petted every day. .. I enjoy life more now.. I'm happier at home than before, the atmosphere at home is now much better, like what we discussed at that time, I'm more responsible and patient, (...) at home I chat or do something like that, so it feels more alive, not just laying on the bed...

A similar experience by subject B who kept a pet dog. Subject B felt that the presence of their pet dog helped Subject B regain positive energy and become enthusiastic in living their daily life. This can be felt when subject B spends time together or just reminisces about a fun incident with their pet dog. The presence of a pet dog in the life of subject B also provides learning to changes in the subject's self. Changes experienced such as being closer to their families, having daily activities, and understanding the affectionate relationship that exists between individuals and animals. Subject B now see the presence of a pet dog as a part of their ideal life. Subject B felt

that their pet dog was a source of entertainment as well as a place to tell stories or share their emotions.

Not much different from the experience of subject C who owns a pet dog, and has considered the dog as part of their family. Through the presence of subject C's pet dog, they are always entertained and it brings positive emotions to improve his mood. This is felt by interacting with their pet dog or simply by watching its behavior. Subject C was satisfied with the life they are living with their pet dog because subject C feels that they are living their ideal life through the presence of a pet dog. Subject C's satisfaction with their life was also influenced by the positive changes they experienced with the presence of their pet dog. One of the big changes for subject C is being able to become a sociable person and learned to sew clothes.

Subject who Cares for Plants (Gardening)

Among subjects who maintain plants (gardening), subject F cares for ornamental foliage plants. Subject F always felt positive emotions while spending time caring for their plants and these positive emotions were able to improve their mood. These positive emotions include happy, calm, relaxed, and excited when caring for the plant. Every morning, subject F makes time to check on their garden, to fill themselves with positive emotions to live their day.

In addition to positive emotions, subject F also felt positive impacts ranging from being more comfortable at home, becoming closer to their parents, to improving themselves. The improvement in subject F involves being good at cooking to becoming a more patient and thorough person. Through the positive changes experienced during nurturing plants (gardening), subject F feels that their life has become more ideal.

I feel happy ehheh fresh, definitely fresh because I see greens, especially if there are new shoots and the new shoots are really cute, the color is definitely fresh, happy, exciting, and so excited. The contribution is quite significant, if I say in a fairly short time, two years, but I can feel that my life is already ideal. I mean, before it was ideal but now it's even more ideal.. now it's comfortable to stay at home even if there are no activities. There are more, like, I'm more patient now.

A similar outcome was expressed by subject G who maintains ornamental foliage plants. In their daily life, subject G feels happy and peaceful through cultivating plants (gardening). While in their garden, subject G was able to gain a clear mind and refocus on their work. In addition, subject G is also happy with the role of plants (gardening) in their life. Plants (gardening) give comfort during difficult times to being able to develop yourself into a patient and calm person in dealing with problems. While maintaining plants (gardening), subject G can live their daily life with enthusiasm.

Likewise, subject H who maintains fruit-bearing plants, feels that the activity of maintaining plants (gardening) is one of the media to control emotions in the subject. Subject H revealed that while maintaining plants (gardening) they were always able to feel positive emotions throughout their day. Not only that, but subject H also expressed satisfaction with their life through nurturing plants that provide learning for the subject themselves so they can become a better person. One of them is not giving up easily, while also learning from one's mistakes.

These are in line with what is felt by subject I who maintains ornamental plants. Subject I view the activities to maintain plants (gardening) as a figure who accompanies and provides changes

to the subject's daily routine. Changes in routine include spending more time at home such as watching movies or cleaning the house while taking care of plants (gardening), while also going out and meeting new friends who are fellow plant lovers.

In addition, the subject I was also able to feel happy with small things, such as when the purchased plants arrived and the plants were able to grow well. Through the various positive outcomes, the subject I was satisfied with their life while taking care of plants.

Subject who Keeps Pets and Cares for Plants (Gardening)

Subject K, who keeps dogs and plants (both decorative and fruit-bearing) feels happy through the presence of these two activities in their life. The activity of keeping a pet dog and plants (gardening) has been considered by subject K as an activity that provides entertainment to motivate the subject in living their daily life. In addition, the activities of keeping a pet dog and plants (gardening) helped subject K to control their emotions in their daily life. The routines created through the presence of pet dogs and plants (gardening) help the subject feel less empty and interact more with the environment around the subject. Subject K also felt that the presence of pet dogs and plants (gardening) fostered enthusiasm for living life.

...short escape, this is a means to escape life temporarily (...) because sometimes I'm lazy, so there are days where they push me to not be lazy. Sometimes when I feel irritated, I take care of my plants, and somehow I forgot I was angry like that... My pets also calm me down when I see him happy, whether he wanders out of the house or plays in the house... After I started taking care of animals and plants, I started to interact with the environment around me... Finally, I have a reason to live.

Not much different from subject L, who keeps a pet cat and ornamental plants, and feels happy and calm when starting their day by interacting with their pet cat or plants. Starting each day by interacting with their cat or plants (gardening) gives a mood boost to subject L. Subject L was also satisfied with the presence of a pet cat and plants (gardening) which brings plenty of positive emotions until subject L experienced positive changes. Starting from being more active, being more sensitive to their environment, and becoming more patient. Overall, subject L felt that they've spent more time with plants (gardening) than with their pet cat, because their cat is not always around the subject.

A similar thing is experienced by subject M who keeps a pet cat and plants (decorative and fruit-bearing). Every time they spend time caring for a pet cat and plants (gardening) it always brings positive emotions to the subject. Emotions felt while being with a pet cat include being happy, calm, and relaxed. Meanwhile, while maintaining plants (gardening) subject M felt satisfied and relaxed.

In addition, subject M is satisfied with their current life, which is more active than before, where subject M used to spend more time with their cell phone. Subject M's current living condition is described as resembling his ideal life, namely having pets and plants (gardening).

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the subjective well-being of young adults who keep pets and plants (gardening) amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The result obtained after interviewing 10 subjects was that all subjects who raise pets and plants (gardening) have subjective

well-being. This is described by feeling happy emotions and the formation of enthusiasm in the subjects to live their daily lives. Along with feeling satisfied with their lives through the presence and support that they received from their pets and plants (gardening).

The following research has several shortcomings, first, the process of searching for subjects does not cover the age criteria for each group. This can be seen in the tendency of the subject's age to be less diverse in the group that keeps pets, most of which are in their twenties. Apart from the less diverse age range, the subjects in the study were also dominated by the female gender compared to males. The group that maintains plants (gardening) consist entirely of female subjects. Meanwhile, the other two groups were found to have one male. Third, is the imbalance of the number of subjects in each group. Seen here are two groups containing three subjects. Meanwhile, the other group contains four subjects. Fourth, the limitations in observing the subject thoroughly during online interviews.

Future research can examine other variables that affect subjective well-being in individuals who raise pets and/or plants (gardening). The research subject can use different age ranges. As well as in individuals who care for other pets such as reptiles, birds or fish. On the gardening side, it can be carried out by distinguishing between individuals who do gardening of ornamental plants and consumption plants.

For the community, it is welcome to start raising and building attachments with pets that provide many benefits ranging from having good physical health to feeling loved. We can start by raising abandoned animals in the neighborhood or adopting pets through a community that rescues abandoned animals. On the other hand, maintaining plants can be started by utilizing vacant land at home as a first step to maintaining plants (gardening). Plants grown can be started from food scraps or seeds from fruits that have been consumed.

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