

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OPTIMISM AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING OF YOUNG ADULTS IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study is to test the relationship between optimism and subjective well-being of young adults in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous studies showed that people's subjective well-being level have reduced, especially in young adults. This study took one of the factors affecting subjective well-being, optimism as a predictor of people's subjective well-being throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Subjective well-being is an individual's cognitive and affective evaluation of their lives. Optimism is an individual's positive attitude of their lives and their future. This study involved 338 young adults. The measuring instruments used in this study are: 1) The Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) adapted from Fadjri; 2) The Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) are both adapted from the Research and Measurement Department Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Tarumanagara. The analysis result using Pearson correlation technique, with $r(338) = 0.251$, $p = 0.00 (< 0.05)$ showed that there was a significant and positive correlation between optimism and subjective well-being. This study also found that between the components of optimism and subjective well-being had a significant relationship between the two variables.

Keywords: Optimism, subjective well-being, young adults, covid-19

1. PREFACE

The beginning of 2020 marked the global COVID-19 pandemic. Since the first case of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan, China, on November 17, 2019, this virus has rapidly spread throughout the world with very tragic effects. Until November 2021, in Indonesia, there were 4.2 million confirmed cases and 143,000 deaths from this virus. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected all aspects of human life. Human social life must also be limited because social contact is unsupported and prohibited. The sudden change and uncertainty over the COVID-19 pandemic has created increasing concerns for the decrease in mental health and human well-being.

Based on research by Blasco-Belled on 541 individuals aged 18-74 years, the results show that life satisfaction appears to decrease due to negative emotions, feelings of helplessness, fear, and avoidance of social interactions. Subsequent research by Brindal, for individuals aged 18 years and over, showed similar results where subjective well-being was negatively impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, this is due to the loss of social connections. The same study was conducted by Choi, for individuals aged 14-71 years and for three months, where the level of life satisfaction, life expectancy, positive affect, and negative affect was seen to have steadily decreased since the announcement of the health alert and the first case was announced.

The stress arising from the COVID-19 pandemic is caused by the fact that most of the activities are conducted online, which results in: boredom; solitude; communication issues; as well as

feelings of uncertainty about when the COVID-19 pandemic will end, some of these conditions can lead to a possible decrease in the subjective well-being of individuals. Seeing the decline in mental health and subjective well-being of the COVID-19 pandemic, optimism is needed so that any information is not perceived as negative, because they lead to a negative effect on individuals. In response to the psychological problems associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, optimism appears to be positively related to coping methods to release negative emotions and stress. A high level of optimism also predicts greater preventive measures to tackle the spread of the coronavirus.

Based on the previous literature, optimism and subjective well-being studies have been conducted many times, which showed that the two are interconnected, other studies have also been conducted in various contexts, namely in the context of medical, caregivers, new students, and during aging. Carver further explained that a high level of optimism is related to the level of an individual's subjective well-being when experiencing difficulties.

This topic is interesting to study because in Indonesia there is few research, especially in the context of COVID-19. Based on previous research, subjective well-being appears to decline among young adults due to stress, depression, fear, and limited social contact. Seeing this, this research took young adults as subjects because changes in subjective well-being during COVID-19 mostly occur among young adults.

Based on the identification of the problems, the research question in this study is to see whether there is a relationship between optimism and subjective well-being of young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is non-experimental quantitative research that is correlational. The sampling technique used in this study is non-probability sampling, in which each member of the population does not have equal opportunity to be included in the sample. The non-probability sampling technique that this research uses is convenience sampling, in which participants are selected based on their affordability and availability. This research determined that the criteria for the subjects in this study were individuals aged 18-40 years. The number of participants in this study was 338.

The instrument used in this study is the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) to measure optimism developed by Scheier and has been adapted by Fadjri. The LOT-R consists of 10 questions to measure two dimensions, namely the dimensions of optimism and pessimism.

Furthermore, subjective well-being uses two instruments, namely the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) developed by Watson and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener both instruments have been adapted by the Research and Measurement Section of the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Tarumanagara. PANAS is a scale related to positive affect and negative affect of subjective well-being in which each item describes the emotional feelings experienced by a person. Meanwhile, SWLS measures a person's life satisfaction based on an evaluative assessment of life from their own perspective. Seeing that the data is normally distributed, this study then used the parametric measurement, Independent-Samples T-Test for the two-valued data and One-Way ANOVA for the one-valued data.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the normality test in this study were carried out using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test analysis. This analysis is used to determine whether the data is normal or abnormally

distributed before continuing with the next data processing technique. The results show that the variables of optimism and subjective well-being are normally distributed. This is obtained from the p-value on the optimism test of 0.077 and the p-value on the subjective well-being test of 0.848. Seeing that the data is normally distributed, this research uses Pearson's analysis technique to test the correlation.

The correlation test result shows that optimism has a correlation with subjective well-being. The results show that $r = 0.251$ and $p = 0.000 (< 0.05)$. Thus, it was found that the optimism variable has a positive and significant correlation with the subjective well-being variable. This is also supported by several previous studies that explain the relationship between optimism and subjective well-being. Optimism has been described as positively related to coping methods to release negative emotions and stress. Therefore, optimism can be used as a means to improve one's subjective well-being by releasing negative emotions.

The correlation test was conducted to find out the relationship between the dimensions of optimism and subjective well-being with the two variables. On the optimism variable, the optimism dimension appears to have a correlation with the subjective well-being variable where $r = 0.406$, $p = 0.000 (< 0.05)$, which means the optimism dimension has a positive and significant relationship with the subjective well-being variable. However, the optimism dimension has a value of $r = -0.013$, $p = 0.819 (> 0.05)$, which means that there is no significant correlation between the pessimism dimension and the subjective well-being variable. The results can be observed further in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlation Test Results for Optimism Dimensions and Subjective Well-Being Variables

Optimism Dimensions	r	p	Explanation
Optimism	0.406	0.000	Significant positive correlation
Pessimism	-0.013	0.819	No correlation

Furthermore, on the subjective well-being variable, the positive affect dimension has a value of $r = 0.485$, $p = 0.000 (< 0.05)$, which means it has a positive and significant relationship with the optimism variable. The negative affect dimension has a value of $r = -0.419$, $p = 0.000 (< 0.05)$, which means it has a negative and significant relationship to the optimism variable. Finally, the dimension of life satisfaction has a value of $r = 0.333$, $p = 0.000 (< 0.05)$, which means it has a positive and significant relationship with the optimism variable. The positive affect dimension and life satisfaction dimension are seen to have a positive relationship to the optimism variable, this is explained by Chang and Sanna, where it was found that optimism affects life satisfaction directly and indirectly through positive affect dimensions. The negative affect dimension was also found to have a significant and negative correlation with the optimism variable, this was further explained by Chang and Sanna, that the negative affect dimension was reported to have a correlation to optimism which was associated with negative psychological outcomes. The results can be observed further in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlation Test Results between Subjective Well-Being Dimensions and Optimism Variable

Subjective Well-Being Dimensions	r	p	Explanation
Positive Affect	0.485	0.000	Significant positive correlation
Negative Affect	-0.419	0.000	Significant negative correlation

Life Satisfaction	0.333	0.000	Significant positive correlation
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Finally, this research conducted a different test of optimism and subjective well-being based on age, gender, religious activity, recent education, employment status, daily activities, monthly income, relationship status, and minor illness. On the optimism variable, in terms of gender, religious activities, recent education, employment status, daily activities, and minor illness, there were no significant differences. However, for age, optimism seems to have a significant difference of $p = 0.005 (< 0.05)$. This is supported through research by Schwaba, which explained that optimism is seen to rise steadily at the age of 30 to 40 years. Furthermore, from the monthly income point of view, optimism has a significant difference of $p = 0.012 (< 0.05)$. This is explained in the research of Puri and Robinson, where optimistic individuals are individuals who have good income results. Finally, optimism was seen to have a significant difference in terms of relationship status with $p = 0.001 (< 0.05)$. This is also supported in research by Assad, that those who are optimistic have a high commitment to their partner and a good and pleasant relationship.

Differential tests on subjective well-being showed that there was no significant difference in terms of age, gender, employment status, monthly income, and minor illness. However, for religious activities, there was a significant difference of $p = 0.005 (< 0.05)$. This is supported in a study that shows that individuals who have high levels of belief in their religion report higher levels of life satisfaction, greater personal happiness, and fewer negative psychosocial consequences of traumatic events. Subjective well-being was also seen to have a significant difference in terms of daily activities with $p = 0.030 (< 0.05)$. This is explained by Argyle, that individuals who work, are generally more satisfied and happy than individuals who have not or do not work. The absence of work or activity results not only in financial difficulties, but also loss of self-esteem, social networks, lack of skills development and a feeling of worthlessness. Finally, subjective well-being in terms of relationship status has a significant difference of $p = 0.001 (< 0.05)$. This result is explained by Tiefenbach and Kohlbacher, where individuals who live with their husbands or wives are significantly happier than those who live alone and are single, dating, or engaged.

This study has several limitations, considering that this research was conducted online, the researcher was unable to control the data for gender, the correctness of participants' answers, and the specificity of some parts of the control of participant data. In addition, this study only covers a few young adults residing in several urban areas in Indonesia, of which the majority are young adults residing in the Greater Jakarta and West Kalimantan regions.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of research on the relationship between optimism and subjective well-being of young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was found that optimism had a positive and significant relationship with subjective well-being. The optimism dimension also has a positive and significant relationship with the subjective well-being variable. Likewise, the dimensions of positive affect and the dimensions of life satisfaction have a positive and significant relationship with optimism variable.

Theoretical suggestions for further research are to conduct research on the same topic related to optimism and subjective well-being, seeing that there is very little research on this topic during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, further research can add aspects of self-esteem, spirituality, relationship status, entertainment or hobbies, education level, income, personal health,

psychological well-being, social trust, or social relationships to see how they relate to subjective well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding practical advice, through this research we hope that young adults can improve their optimism and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be done in several ways, such as: (1) doing activities that can reinforce positive emotions, such as watching funny movies; (2) worship, individuals can also increase spirituality by helping others such as donating to charity; (3) having daily activities, individuals can find work or do other routine activities during this pandemic; (4) pursue a hobby or skill, with this they can have new skills that allow them to establish business opportunities; and (5) establish relationships with other people, such as communicating frequently, being open to others, being a good listener when someone has a problem, willing to help others, and speaking softly and not rudely.

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