Effect of Ego Identity Status on Subjective Wellbeing in Students

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Subjective wellbeing (SWB) of new students is essential, as they end up in very different settings compared to high school. The learning system in universities strongly demand the independence of students. However, new students may still be in adolescence, and are still looking for their own identity. They must make important decisions regarding their future in an increasingly complex society. The purpose of this study was to find out the status of ego identity towards SWB from students. The research population comprised of 185 students, 94 female and 91 male. Methods of data collection involved using Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Diener (1984), and the scale of Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (OM-EIS), developed by J.E Marcia, Waterman, Matterson, Archer & Orlofsky (1993). The statistical analysis technique used in this research was the variance analysis (ANOVA) technique. The results showed that there were differences in SWB for students with different ego identity statuses. The findings of this research will help guide students.

Key words: *Ego identity status, subjective wellbeing, adolescence*

Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood (Rumini & Sundari, 2004). The classification of adolescents, according to Thornburg in Dariyo (2004), involves three stages: early adolescence (ages 13-14 years), middle adolescence (aged 15-17 years) and late adolescence (ages 17-21 years). New students are classified as late teens undergoing a transition period from school to college.

According to Erikson in Hurlock (1994), the essential task for teenagers is to achieve a solid self-identity through searching and exploration of themselves, and the social environment. The achievement of self-identity in adolescence helps individuals respond in a manner characterised by self-belief. Self-identity in adolescence reflects the teenager's self, work, and their role in society.

University students have an essential role in the development of a country (Fitriana, 2018). This is because university students have fundamental responsibilities, both as individuals and as a part of their society (Muhibullah, 2012). Unfortunately, the quality of university students tends to be decreasing. One of the factors decreasing student quality is the student's sense of self (Sudjarwadi, 2013).

Problems experienced by students can be within the learning process or outside of it. One issue within the learning process is student lateness. Other issues relate to the level of concentration students have in class. Students also have problems related to the learning methods provided on campus (Prasetiyo & Andriani, 2011). Issues that arise outside the learning process relate to relationships with peers, financial arrangements, and problems with the family (Qonitatin, Widyawati & Asih, 2011).

These student problems can negatively affect students, causing low life satisfaction. In other words, these issues can lead to low subjective wellbeing (Qonitatin et al., 2011). Individuals with a high level of subjective wellbeing will have a positive life experience and be able to experience events positively, when compared to individuals with low subjective wellbeing (Diener & Lucas, 1999). Individuals with high levels of subjective wellbeing can better control their emotions and deal with life events, whereas someone with a low level of subjective wellbeing can often be characterised by dissatisfaction, as they are not grateful for their current circumstances. These latter individuals tend to be unhappy, dissatisfied with themselves, dissatisfied with the group, and have feelings of guilt and shame, sadness, anxiety and worry. They are overwhelmed by feelings of anger, stress, jealousy, and depression (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003).

Diener and Chan (2011) also stated that subjective wellbeing is important to learn, as it is not only useful to assess a person's quality of life, but can also have a positive impact on that life. One positive benefit is that, when a person's subjective level of wellbeing is high, it positively affects health and endurance. Someone who is happy tends to be healthier, not easily hurt and has self-control.

Several factors influence subjective wellbeing. They include personality, a purpose in life, adaptability and coping mechanisms, health, income, religion, marriage, age, gender differences, job morale, education, and intelligence (Diener & Lucas, 1999). The other factor which affects the level of subjective wellbeing is ego identity status. According to Pavot and Diener in Linley and Joseph (2004), the several factors that influence subjective wellbeing include personality, nature, social relations, income, unemployment and social or cultural influences. Zhang (2016) concluded from his research that the students of China West Normal University showed a significantly positive relationship between self-concept and subjective wellbeing.

Subjective wellbeing is closely related to the concept of self-identity which relies on a teenager's ability to explore various inner issues, such as recognising oneself (their personal strengths and weaknesses), social relations (with multiple groups), going to school, working, politics and so on (Marcia, 1966).

This study aimed to find out whether there are differences in subjective wellbeing in students with different ego identity status, information that will explain the presence or absence of its effects on students' well-being. It is expected to help counsellors guide students.

James E. Marcia (1966) developed the theory of identity status which is created via two processes in one's life, exploration and commitment-making. To have a healthy self-identity, a teenager must explore various things, such as recognising oneself (their personal strengths and weaknesses), social relations (with multiple groups), going to school, working, politics and so on. After exploring various opportunities, an individual has to commit to one of them. By committing to values, beliefs and goals, a person's identity is formed.

According to Erikson in Marcia (1966), self-identity is a coherent concept that consists of goals, values and beliefs in a person. Adolescents can experience four self-identity statuses: (1) Achievement. This is an identity status marked by a commitment to decide a crisis; (2) Foreclosure, an identity status that is marked when a person does not go through a crisis, but has a responsibility decided by someone else; (3) Moratorium, when someone considers alternatives (showing the individual is in a crisis) and does not seem to find any commitment; and (4) Identity Diffusion, an identity status characterised by a lack of commitment and lack of seriousness in considering alternatives in life (not through a crisis). In this context, a crisis is a period when a person experiences confusion when it comes to making a decision. At the same time, commitment is the determination of self-modality about one's work or belief system.

Explanation of the four statuses of self-identity, according to Marcia (1966), can also be discussed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Description of Four Statuses of Self-Identity.

Self-Identity Status	Description	Example
Identity Achievement Crisis & Commitment	An identity status marked by a commitment to decide a crisis.	A person finds their identity after a crisis and is committed to himself.
Foreclosure No Crisis & Commitment	When a person does not go through a crisis, but has a commitment decided by someone else.	Someone follows their parents' wishes without understanding why their parents made a decision as to their identity.
Moratorium Crisis & No Commitment	When someone considers alternatives (showing the individual is in a crisis) and doesn't seem to find any commitment.	The individual is considering several alternative identities that are suitable for them, but in this case, they still cannot determine what identity is appropriate for them.
Identity Diffusion No Crisis & No Commitment	An identity status characterised by lack of commitment and lack of seriousness in considering alternatives in life.	Individuals just follow a steady path, without exploration and are committed to identity.

Although the terms 'wellbeing' and 'happiness' are often used interchangeably, psychologists have agreed that subjective wellbeing is a widespread phenomenon that includes emotional responses of a person, satisfaction with their domain, and a global assessment of the satisfaction of life (Diener & Lucas, 1999).

There are two components of subjective wellbeing – cognitive and affective (Diener, 2000). For components of overall life satisfaction (LS-Life Satisfaction), the affective component consists of two elements, positive and negative affect (NA Affect-Negative). Compton (2005) explains that, to know someone is happy or not, the person can be asked to explain the world around him or himself. It appears that there is an affective aspect involved when evaluating happiness, while assessing life satisfaction involves more cognitive aspects, since there is awareness in opinion. Diener et al. (2003) revealed that, when a person is cognitively referred to as having subjective wellbeing, they judge themselves as having overall life satisfaction (SWLS), and affectively feel a more positive effect (APOS), and only a slight negative effect (ANEG). Diener, Suh and Oishi in Eid and Larsen (2008) explained that individuals are said to have high subjective wellbeing if they have life satisfaction, feel joy, and rarely have

unpleasant emotions, such as sadness or anger. Conversely, individuals are said to have low subjective wellbeing if they are dissatisfied with their lives, experience little excitement or affection, and feel more negative emotions, such as anger or anxiety.

From a longitudinal study, Kansky, Allen and Diene (2016) found that APOS early adolescents were able to predict the high and low levels of conflict they experienced when they stepped into young adulthood. It was concluded from this study that affective wellbeing was positive in early adolescence, and related to the low level of conflict experienced during young adulthood. Some research shows that an APOS position reduces the tendency to use controversial strategies when bargaining (Barsade, 2002).

Methods

This study used quantitative methods. Subjective wellbeing was measured using the Positive Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) developed by Watson, Clark, & Tellegen (1988). It consists of an APOS (Positive Affect) of up to 10 items and an ANEG (Negative Affect) of 10 pieces, and used Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener (1984) and Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985), which includes a total of five items. Ego identity status was measured using the scale of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (OM-EIS). This approach was developed by J.E. Marcia et al. (1993), and consists of 40 items based on four groups – Achievement, Foreclosure, Moratorium and Diffusion.

The sample population comprised of 185 new students from Mercu Buana Yogyakarta University. It was made up of 94 female and 91 male students. The data analysis technique utilised in this research was ANOVA using SPSS for Windows version 22.0. The analysis was carried out three times to evaluate the difference between SWLS and four ego identity status groups, APOS with four ego identity status groups, ANEG (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of ANOVA Ego Identity Status (EIS) to SWLS, APOS, and ANEG

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SWLS	Between Groups	781,663	3	260,554	7,109	,000
	Within Groups	6634,315	181	36,654		
	Total	7415,978	184			
APOS	Between Groups	489,421	3	163,140	4,089	,008
	Within Groups	7221,962	181	39,900		
	Total	7711,384	184			
ANEG	Between Groups	399,365	3	133,122	3,369	,020
	Within Groups	7152,657	181	39,517		
	Total	7552,022	184			

SWLS: Satisfaction of Work-Life Scale; APOS: Affect Positive; ANEG: Affect Negative

Results and Discussion

Table 3. Inter-correlation SWLS, APOS, and ANEG.

	SWLS	APOS	ANEG
SWLS	1	,193**	-,186*
APOS	,193**	1	-,261**
ANEG	-,186*	-,261**	1

* p<0.05
** p<0.01
SWLS: *Satisfaction of Work Life Scale*; APOS: *Affect Positive*; ANEG: *Affect Negative*

Based on the results of the intercorrelation analysis between SWLS, APOS, and ANEG in Table 3, it is clear that there is a significant positive relationship between SWLS and APOS of 0.193 (p <0.01). There is also a significant negative relationship between SWLS and ANEG of 0.186, with a p-value of <0.05, and a significant negative relationship between APOS and ANEG of 0.261, with the value of p <0.01.

Thus, subjective wellbeing in this study was consistent with Diener et al.'s (2003) findings, which state that a person is said to have subjective wellbeing when he or she cognitively assess his/herself for life satisfaction (SWLS); and affectively feels the presence of more positive affect (APOS), and less negative affect (ANEG).

This conclusion confirms the findings of Diener, Oishi, and Lucas (2015), that subjective wellbeing is an effective measure in positive psychology. Subjective wellbeing is defined as an individual's cognitive and affective evaluation of their lives. This evaluation includes (1) emotional reactions to events that have been experienced, and (2) cognitive assessment of satisfaction and fulfilment of the desired expectations. Thus, subjective wellbeing is a broad concept, which in this case, includes pleasant emotional experiences, low negative moods, and high levels of life satisfaction (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

This finding is also in line with the conclusiona of Diener et al. (2017), namely, that individuals can be classed as having high subjective wellbeing if the cognitive component is high, the positive affect component is high, and the negative affect component is low. If it is found that one of them is not fulfilled, such as low cognitive component, low positive affect component, or high negative affect component, then subjective wellbeing is considered low.

In this study, students' research subjects had more positive effects than negative ones. The affective component of SWB was measured using PANAS developed by Watson (1988). On this scale, the positive affective component consists of 10 items, namely interested, excited, alert, strong, enthusiastic, proud, inspired, active, attentive, determined. The negative affective

component also consists of 10 items, namely distressed, upset, guilty, scared, hostile, irritable, ashamed, nervous, jittery, afraid.

Although there are not many differences found with PANAS, it would be better if measurement considered local culture, with the research including an indigenous psychological approach, as done by Sahrah & Yuniasanti (2019), which measured positive and negative affect scales based on Indonesian Javanese culture.

It was concluded in the study of Sahrah and Yuniasanti (2019) that the APOS scale consists of 12 items – glad, happy, cheerful, relieved, joyful, satisfied, peaceful, excited, amused, prosperous, proud, and enthusiastic. The ANEG scale consists of 14 items – restless, hurt, disappointed, irritated, angry, depressed, sad, hated, resentful, tired, fed up, upset, grieved, and restless.

As researched by Martin (2014), cultural factors are very influential on one's affective experience. Cultural diversity in the workplace strongly influences employees. The effect can be positive and beneficial, or not. ANEG can include dysfunctional conflict, lost productivity, and difficulty achieving harmony in group settings. APOS leads to a strong knowledge base process and a tendency to expand a business. Most of the effects of cultural diversity in the workplace depend on how well an organisational leaders manage them. With the right strategic planning, top management can increase positive effects and reduce negative effects of cultural diversity at work (Martin, 2014).

This inference was based on a breakdown of ANOVA on SWLS, APOS, and ANEG against four groups of ego identity status (EIS): Achievement, Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Diffusion, and obtained significant results with $p < 0.05$ (see Table 2). It proved that there were mean differences between SWLS, APOS, and ANEG on the four EIS status ego identity groups, namely: Achievement, Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Diffusion. To see the mean difference to the four status EIS ego identity groups against SWLS, APOS, and ANEG, a Scheffe Test was completed, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Scheffe Test: Mean Difference of SWLS, APOS and ANEG on each Ego Identity Status (EIS)

		Achievement	Foreclosure	Moratorium	Diffusion
SWLS	*Achievement*	-	1,99	3,61*	5,62**
	Foreclosure		-	1,62	3,63*
	Moratorium			-	2,01
	Diffusion				-
APOS	*Achievement*	-	3,38	4,13*	3,50
	Foreclosure		-	,75	,12
	Moratorium			-	,63
	Diffusion				-
ANEG	*Achievement*	-	,63	2,94	2,07
	Foreclosure		-	3,57	2,71
	Moratorium			-	,87
	Diffusion				-

The Scheffe Test showed that there were significant differences in SWLS in (1) EIS Achievement and Moratorium, (2) EIS Achievement and Diffusion, and (3) EIS Foreclosure and Diffusion. However, there were no significant differences in the mean SWLS in (1) EIS Achievement and Foreclosure, (2) EIS Achievement and Diffusion, (3) and EIS Moratorium and Diffusion. The Scheffe Test for mean differences from APOS and ANEG showed there were only significant differences in APOS in the EIS Achievement and EIS Moratorium. In contrast, the mean difference in other ego identity status groups was not significant.

This study reaffirms the research conducted by Waterman (2007). He found that there was a positive relationship between Achievement and SWB, and a negative relationship with identity diffusion. A person who has achieved self-identity status can be said to have been able to determine their own identity. Desmita (2008) said that if a person has obtained an identity, he will realise his characteristics, such as ethnicity or non-ethnicity, his aspirations, his goals in the future he wants to achieve, his feeling that he can and must adjust his life orientation. Teenagers who succeed in achieving a stable identity have a clear view of themselves, understand their differences and similarities with others, realise their strengths and weaknesses, will be full of confidence, responsive to various situations, able to make important decisions, able to anticipate future challenges and recognise their role in society.

Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that (1) groups of individuals with Achievement and Foreclosure identity status tend not to be different, just as those of Moratorium and Diffusion identity, (2) groups of individuals who have Achievement status tend to be different from Foreclosure and Diffusion individuals. This is possible because the group of individuals with Achievement have

experienced an identity crisis and can handle it with determination. The crisis encourages individuals to realise their potential and prove that they can overcome it, even though they have to go through experiencing failure (Dariyo, 2004). Therefore, it is not surprising that a group of individuals who have achieved Achievement have higher subjective wellbeing than those with a Foreclosure identity status, where there is a lack of an identity crisis and people find it difficult to accept realities. These individuals cannot handle these challenges well, sometimes even opting for self-defence mechanisms, such as rationalisation, regression, reaction formation and so on (Dariyo, 2004). For individuals with a Diffusion identity status, confusion in pursuing individuality means they do not face a crisis and lack the determination to resolve it. This is because an individual does not commit and are not sure of themselves. Some lack purpose in life and tend to be unhappy (Dariyo, 2004). By knowing the difference in ego groups identifying the status of students' subjective wellbeing, counsellors can provide the most effective and appropriate guidance for their students. Counsellors can guide in a more specialised and individualised manner after finding out the differences in subjective wellbeing when considering ego identities.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that groups of individuals with Achievement and Moratorium identity status tend not to be different. The groups of Moratorium and Diffusion identity status are not different, but the category of individuals who have Achievement identity status tend to be dissimilar from Foreclosure and Diffusion. This can assist in giving guidance more effectively, based on individuated ego identity.

Acknowledgements

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