

Subjective Well-being during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Malaysia

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This present study is aimed at exploring the subjective well-being of Indonesian and Malaysian during Covid-19 pandemic. A total of 160 respondents of Indonesian and Malaysian were asked to respond to the questions about subjective well-being during Covid-19 pandemic. This study is quantitative research. The scale used for measuring subjective well-being in this empirical study is APOS and ANEG. The result of these current studies showed that Indonesians have a higher level of subjective well-being compared with Malaysians during Covid-19 pandemic. Besides, the result of this study also mentioned that there is no significant difference in subjective well-being between male and female of Indonesian and Malaysian during Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: *Subjective Well-being, Covid-19, pandemic, Malaysian, Indonesian*

Introduction

Everybody panics when the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) comes. Starting from December 2019, the novel virus has spread to some countries in the world (Azamfirei, 2020). Thus, coronavirus became an international concern, and consequently, the World Health Organisation declared nCov-2019 or Covid-19 as a global pandemic.

This novel coronavirus is spreading in almost all over the world. It was firstly identified in a wet market of Wuhan, China (Chen et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2020). The number of confirmed cases is increasing day by day. As of 1st May 2020, more than 3.3 Million cases of Covid-19 infection have been confirmed around the world. It is increasing to 5 million cases on 20th May 2020. The biggest number of confirmed cases in the USA (more than 35%). To date, there has been a debate on the sources of this virus. However, it is mentioned that this virus is closely related to the virus of the bat (Azamfirei, 2020).

Indonesia and Malaysia are two of the other countries that also experienced this virus. As of 1st May 2020, Indonesia has more than 10 thousand confirmed cases with around 7.6 % of death. It is a high rate of total death compared with other countries. This disease and high level of death increased the level of anxiety of people—besides, Covid-19 lead to fear and uncertainty (Ozili & Arun, 2020). The uncertainties regarding the outbreak create anxiety (Salim et al., 2020).

It is a bit different from Malaysia. As of early January 2020, Malaysia started with 22 cases through imported cases. 1st May 2020, more than six hundred confirmed cases in with around 1.6 % of death. As a consequence, on 18th March 2020, the Malaysian government decided to lock-down the country with the regulation called Movement Control Order (MCO). This caused social and economic disruption (Salim et al., 2020). During MCO, people must stay at home and maintain social distancing (Govindasamy & Lan, 2011). All non-essential sectors are closed, including all universities, schools, and religious places (Salim et al., 2020). Regarding this, essential sectors like banking, communications, food are available. It is also mentioned that interstate travel is not allowed except the person have a valid reason.

The impact of this virus hits many sectors, such as finance, sports industry, event industry, entertainment industry, health, and education sector (Ozili & Arun, 2020). Besides, the impact of this pandemic is also related to a psychological problem. During this pandemic, the school are closed. Besides, people reschedule their vacation plans. It is because vacation destination or tourist objects are often in crowded places. Therefore, people also have to reschedule their trip. It is because some of the countries applied lock-down policy. This led to happiness problems. Furthermore, nCov-2019 brings major psychological problems. It is because the coronavirus can lead to health problems that also can lead to psychological causes like anxiety that can influence subjective well-being.

Subjective well-being is people's subjective evaluation of their lives which includes life satisfaction, pleasant emotion, the feeling of fulfilment, satisfaction with domains such as marriage and work, and low level of unpleasant emotion (Diener & Scollon, 2003). Subjective well-being is a big issue in society. It is because of this virus has a very rapid spread becoming epidemic (Li et al., 2020). Then, people become sick faster. Furthermore, people become easily anxious and unhappy. Besides, the spread and the cause are unpredictable (Huang et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2020). Therefore, the spread of this virus can lead to subjective well-being issue.

Moreover, the level of anxiety of people is increasing during the outbreak. It is because coronavirus can cause multiple systems of infections such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (Yin & Wunderink, 2018). This anxiety can also lead to subjective well-being concern. Based on the discussions above, the objective

of this present study is to investigate the level of subjective well-being of Indonesian and Malaysian during Covid-19 pandemic.

Literature Review

Subjective Well-being

Definition of subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being is people's subjective evaluation of their lives which includes life satisfaction, pleasant emotion, the feeling of fulfilment, satisfaction with domains such as marriage and work, and low level of unpleasant emotion (Diener & Scollon, 2003).

Diener (2000) mentioned that subjective well-being is an evaluation of person life cognitively and affectively. Cognitive evaluation concern with how a person feel satisfied with their life, whereas affective evaluation is regarding how frequent the individual experienced positive and negative affect.

Subjective well-being is also defined as a global assessment of all aspects of a person's life. It is also mentioned that subjective well-being is related to pleasant effect, unpleasant effect, and life satisfaction (Fitriana, 2018).

Aspects of Subjective Well-being

There are three components of subjective well-being, namely judgement of life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect (Diener, 1984). Life satisfaction is regarding a person able to enjoy a happy experience (Fitriana, 2018). Positive affect is related to experiencing much pleasant emotion or mood, whereas the negative effect is regarding experiencing few unpleasant emotion or moods (Diener, 2000).

Determinants of subjective Well-being

There are some sources of subjective well-being, such as goals, temperament and personality, quality social relationship, basic need fulfilment, health, demographics, resources, culture, income, comparison standards, age, gender, race, employment, education, religion, family, marriage, social contact, life events, personality, activities, biological influences (Diener, 1984; Diener & Scollon, 2003). The other factor of subjective well-being is traditional value and norm furthermore; another determinant of subjective well-being is life events (Diener, 1984).

Corona Virus

Corona virus is a novel virus. Corona virus is positive-sense, single-stranded RNA viruses (Lu et al., 2020). The new corona virus was identified in a wet food market in Wuhan, China. This virus has a very rapid spread (Li et al., 2020) and the cause is unpredictable (Huang et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; H. Lu et al., 2020).

There are some factors that influencing people experienced the corona virus. The first is age. Previous research mentioned that the biggest age group that experienced confirmed cases of novel coronavirus is adults (Li et al., 2020). Besides, it is also mentioned that sex is one of the factors of coronavirus (Huang et al., 2020). The prior empirical study mentioned that most of the infected patients were male (73%).

Subjective Well-being and Covid-19 Pandemic

One of the determinants of subjective well-being is life events (Diener, 1984). Furthermore, a good event is regarding positive effect whereas the bad event is related to negative affect. The pandemic of Covid-19 gives bad experience for people that can lead to negative affect. As it is mentioned before that negative affect is one of the subjective well-being aspects. Therefore, it can be concluded that life event, such as pandemic Covid-19 can influence subjective well-being. Besides, pandemic Covid-19 can influence the level of anxiety of a person as it is mentioned that the characteristic of corona virus is that it has a very rapid spread (Li et al., 2020). Then, people become sick faster. Furthermore, people become easily anxious and unhappy. Besides, the spread and the cause are unpredictable (Huang et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; H. Lu et al., 2020). From the explanations above, it can be summed up that anxiety can lead to subjective well-being matters.

Research Method

This research is quantitative research. The dependent variable of this current study is subjective well-being, and the independent variable of this research is the demographic factors like age and gender.

The subject of the Research

The subject of this research is Indonesians and Malaysians citizens, male and female. The previous study mentioned that almost half of the confirmed cases of novel coronavirus is adults (Huang et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020). Therefore, the subject of this research is adult. 90 Indonesian and 70 Malaysian respondents have participated in this research. Respondents were approached by using google form due to social distancing matters.

One hundred sixty respondents (90 Indonesian and 70 Malaysian; 44 male and 16 Female) of Malaysian and Indonesian were participating in this research. Respondents filled up the questionnaire. The sampling approach of this research is convenience sampling. The respondents who were responding voluntarily in this research can be seen in the table as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to country and gender

Gender	Country	N
Male	Malaysia	4
	Indonesia	40
Female	Malaysia	66
	Indonesia	50
Total		160

Measurements

This current research used questionnaires to obtain data from the respondents. There are two sections of this questionnaire. Section A consists of personal information such as gender, age, and nationality, while section B consists of subjective well-being measurements. The subjective well-being measurement is derived from Sahrah & Yuniasanti (2019). The scale was distributed by using an online survey.

The measurement for assessing subjective well-being is derived from APOS and ANEG Scale (Sahrah & Yuniasanti, 2019). This measurement consists of 15 questions of APOS and 15 questions of ANEG expressing subjects feel. The example of ANEG statement is “*resah*”. Whereas the example of APOS statement is “*senang*”.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done to ascertain the level of subjective well-being of Indonesian and Malaysian respondents during Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of the demographic factors. Independent sample tests analysis were carried out for analysing the data of subjective well-being during Covid-19 pandemic.

Results and Discussions

Result

The level of subjective well-being between Indonesians and Malaysians during Covid-19 Pandemic

The result of statistical analysis in exploring the level of subjective well-being between Indonesians and Malaysians during Covid-19 pandemic is described as follows in Table 2—the difference of Subjective Well-being level by Country.

Table 2: The result of independent samples test

	Country	N	Mean
SWB	Malaysia	70	7.6143
	Indonesia	90	16.9222

Table 3: The result of Independent samples test

		F	Sig	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
SWB	Equal variances assumed	9.656	0.002	-2.576	0.011
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.662	0.009

From the homogeneity analysis, the F score is 9.565, with a p-value of 0.002. If the score of p is less than 0.050, it can be said that the data is homogenous. For the independent sample t-test, the t score is 2.576 with a p-value of 0.011. If the p-value is less than 0.050, it can be mentioned that there is a significant difference between the group. Based on the criteria, it can be said that there is a significant difference in subjective well-being between Indonesian and Malaysian. Indonesian has a higher level of subjective well-being (Mean=16.92) compared with Malaysian (Mean= 7.6).

The level of Subjective well-being between Indonesia and Malaysian during Covid-19 Pandemic from a gender perspective

Table 4: The difference of Subjective Well-being by gender

	Gender	N	Mean
SWB	Male	44	12.3409
	Female	116	13.0431

Table 5: The result of Independent samples test

		F	Sig	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
SWB	Equal variances assumed	2.032	0.156	-0.171	0.864
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.161	0.873

From the homogeneity analysis, the F score is 2.032, with a p-value of 0.156. If the score of p is more than 0.050, it can be said that the data is not homogenous. For the independent sample t-test, the t score is 0.161 with a p-value of 0.873. If the p-value is more than 0.050, it can be mentioned that there is no significant difference between the group. Based on the criteria, it can be said that there is no significant difference in subjective well-being between male and female of Malaysian and Indonesian during Covid-19 pandemic. Female has higher level of subjective well-being (Mean=13.043) compared with male (Mean=12.34).

Discussion

The results show that the Indonesian have a high level of subjective well-being when compared to Malaysian during Covid-19 pandemic. The mean of subjective well-being score of Indonesian (16.92) is higher than Malaysian (7.6).

However, the result of these current studies is a bit different from past studies about the comparative study of happiness between Malaysian and Indonesian (Laile et al., 2012). This study found that Malaysian is happier compared with Indonesian. It is because happiness is determined by many factors other than wealth. Those other factors are the individual, education and environment. The past study mentioned that Malaysian are happier than Indonesian due to economic factor (Jaafar et al., 2012).

One of the factors that influence subjective well-being index is culture. *Nrimo* is one of Indonesian's cultures, especially Javanese (Murtisari, 2013). It is accepting all the things happens to an individual as the destiny of the God that should be accepted sincerely although it is in bad conditions like what happened in Covid-19 pandemic. This led to a high level of subjective well-being. Malaysian and Indonesian are interpreting happiness based on their traditional values and norms (Jaafar et al., 2012).

There are some impacts of this pandemic. One of the impacts is on how people do their job. Government apply for work from home policy. The experience of work from home policy, some family can feel the oneness of the family. It is because almost every member of the family stays at home. Children study from home and parents work from home. This can lead to a higher level of subjective well-being.

The other impacts of this pandemic are related to health, social, and psychological aspects. The psychological impact is one of the biggest impacts for the human being. Uncertainty made people unhappy. The uncertainty is regarding the time when the pandemic is ending and also regarding work. Some company fire their employees, and consequently, anxiety also increased (Abas & Yuniasanti, 2019). Thus, people have to defence to be saved.

Malaysia committed lock-down the country on 18th March 2020 (Kuddus, 2020; Salim et al., 2020). The biggest cases in Malaysia were traced to a gathering of 16.000 in a mosque in the downtown of Kuala Lumpur at the end of February (Kuddus, 2020). In contrast, one of the big cases in Indonesia is the religious gathering in Gowa, Sulawesi. Although the Indonesian government have cancelled the event, about 10.000 people from fourteen countries had already arrived (Kuddus, 2020).

High level of subjective well-being is characterised by a high level of life satisfaction; people experienced more positive affect than negative affect. One of the factors that can lead to a high level of subjective well-being is work from home and study from home policy. Although this pandemic makes people anxious, they can stay together with their family in a long time. This can make Indonesian getting closer to the family. The experience of work from home policy make the family feel the oneness of the family. It is because almost every member of the family stays at home. Children study from home and parents are work from home. This can lead to a higher level of subjective well-being. As it is stated that family is one of the domains of life satisfaction and one of subjective well-being domain is life satisfaction (Diener, 1984).

Summary

Currently over 800 death cases out of more than 10.500 confirmed cases in Indonesia in 1st May 2020. Whereas in Malaysia, to date, more than 100 death cases out of over 6000 positive cases of coronavirus. This illness affected human beings, particularly causing a psychological issue.

One of the psychological issues experienced by the people during Covid-19 pandemic is subjective well-being. The level of subjective well-being is affected anxiety of the people. Besides, subjective well-being is also affected by people health condition as it is stated that health is one of the factors of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 2002).

Generally, based on the data analysis, it can be mentioned that Indonesian have a higher level of subjective well-being than Malaysian during Covid-19. Besides, data analysis also mentioned that there is no significant difference in subjective well-being between male and female of Malaysian and Indonesian during Covid-19 pandemic. It is because Malaysian and Indonesian are interpreting happiness based on their traditional values and norm.

There are some impacts of this pandemic. One of the impacts is on how people do their job. Government apply for work from home and study from home policy. This can make Indonesian getting closer to the family. The experience of work from home policy make the family feel the oneness of the family. It is because almost every member of the family is

living at home. Children study from home and parents are work from home. This can lead to a higher level of subjective well-being. As it is stated that family is one of the domains of life satisfaction and one of subjective well-being domain is life satisfaction (Diener, 1984).

Recommendation

According to World Health Organisation, some steps must be carried out by countries to cut the Covid-19 chain, such as detecting, testing, treating, isolating, tracing every contact, and mobilising the citizens (Anjorin, 2020).

As of 1st May 2020, Indonesia has more than ten hundred confirmed cases with around 7.6 % of death, and it is increasing significantly to the level of around 20 hundred confirmed cases in 20th May 2020. On the contrary, people still become nonchalant as it is mentioned that Indonesian was unconcerned (Kuddus, 2020). It can be seen from the disobedience of the people in complying the regulation of social distancing, using a mask, and also doing *mudik* in around *lebaran or Eid* day. Furthermore, it can be mentioned that people were too relaxed in facing the pandemic. Therefore, people have to be more alert to health protocol.

One of the ways to mobilise the citizen is by having Worked from Home and Study from Home policy. This policy still can be continued. This policy can make the family feel the oneness of the family. It is because almost every member of the family stays at home. Children can continue to study from home, and parents continue to work from home. This can lead to a higher level of subjective well-being. Creating higher quality of Work from Home and Study from Home is the essential thing that we can do to make the life of the people happier.

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