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Table of Content

Preliminary Study of Subjective Well Being in Adolescents: Qualitative Survey Analysis

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Abstract

The subjective well-being on this study concerned on adolescents' self-reported assessments of their own subjective well-being. It is an issue of concern of students. This study aims to examine the level of subjective well-being among students. We performed this descriptive study in Jakarta, from January to February 2020. This research was conducted on 134 teenagers aged 17 to 18 years living in Jakarta. There were 115 (85.8%) women and 19 (14.2%) men. In this study, adolescents' view about their subjective well-being were gathered through open-ended questions. This study uses qualitative mixed method design. The form consists of three open-ended questions pertaining to views of adolescents regarding the concept of well-being. The answers are then combined and collected under the general header. Data analysis uses MAXQDA analysis tools to develop thematic coding and take the highest frequency. The results found that adolescents' opinions about subjective well-being include: productivity, positive emotion, social oriented, need satisfaction, minor challenges, health, religiosity, and independent.

Keywords: subjective well-being, thematic coding, adolescents.

1. Introduction

Positive psychology aims to change the perspective of psychology that tends to be negative and only improve the worst, into a perspective that can build positive qualities in life (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). Personal traits' components of positive psychology include happiness, optimism, subjective well-being, and self-determination (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). One component related to the concept of positive psychology is subjective well-being (SWB). Subjective well-being has been used in several studies to scientifically define fairly abstract dimensions, including happiness, moral outlook, life satisfaction, and positive and negative emotions (Diener, 1984; Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). There are three general components that are the focus of subjective well-being, namely the assessment of life satisfaction (cognitive), the affective aspects of positive affect (PA), and negative affect (NA) (Diener, 1984). One measuring device that uses affective dimensions (PA and NA) named HEAT has been developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen; and has been proven as a valid, reliable, and effective measurement tool (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988; Crawford & Henry, 2004). Subjective well-being, especially in the affective dimension, affects many aspects of life, such as social relations, work, health, etc. (Diener, 1984; Diener & Ryan, 2009).

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Positive psychology tries to promote changes in the field of psychology that not only discusses disorders or diseases, but also discusses work, education, insight, love, growth, and play, as well as implementing scientific methods for complex human life (Seligman, 2002). In writing the concept of positive psychology, Seligman (2002) stated that positive psychology includes positive experiences, such as past subjective well-being and satisfaction, joy, pleasure, and present happiness, along with constructive awareness about the future, which are optimism, hope, and faith. Personal traits components of positive psychology include happiness, optimism, subjective well-being, and self-determination (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000).

- Adolescents have various perspectives in interpreting subjective well-being.

- The highest rated themes of subjective well-being are productivity and positive emotions.

- Contributing to social environment will make adolescents feel prosperous.

Subjective well-being is an individual's perspective and a way of assessing the individual's life cognitively and affectively (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2009; Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). Subjective well-being is also said to be a scientific language of abstract constructs such as happiness, and has been linked to one component in positive psychology that needs to be investigated further (Seligman & Csizentmihalyi, 2000). Overall, subjective well-being is a broad concept that encompasses experiencing high levels of positive emotions and moods, low levels of negative emotions and moods, and high life satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 2009) as indicators that are independent from each other (Huebner & Dew, 1996).

Measurement of subjective well-being usually utilizes the self-report method, where participants are asked to show global evaluations such as their life satisfaction or how often they experience certain feelings (Diener & Ryan, 2009). For the formulation of the problems in this study, namely, (1) What conditions make the subjects achieve well-being in the last two months, or more, as long as the subject could remember? (2) What is the description of feeling unwell that is meant by the subject? and (3) The method used by the subjects to be able to achieve well-being?

2. Methods

Previous studies that aim to define situations were designed according to the scanning model (Karasar, 2003). The present study analyzes the situation because this study aims to find out how adolescents view subjective well-being. Therefore, this study is considered a patterned study that is designed according to the scanning model. Next, researchers utilized theories and evidence to define well-being, and to build a framework of subjective well-being. This qualitative survey research seeks to explain and find variations of research variables in order to develop instruments for measuring the subjective well-being of adolescents in the intended population.

2.1 *Participants*

The participants were teenagers in DKI Jakarta. Participants were chosen directly. A total of 134 participants consisting of 115 (85.8%) female students and 19 (14.2%) male students with age ranging from 17 to 18 years old were involved in this study. This study aims to determine how adolescents view subjective well-being.

2.2 *Instruments*

An open-ended questionnaire that seeks to measure the "Youth's Views on Subjective well-being", was developed to determine adolescents' perceptions regarding their well-being. This

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questionnaire consists of three open-ended questions to determine their views on subjective well-being. These questions listed on the research forms provide contextual information and guidance on interpretations or perspectives taken by adolescents regarding their subjective well-being, which can be completed anonymously or not anonymously, depending on the needs of researchers / instructors.

The answers were combined and collected under the same heading. The data were then analyzed using MAXQDA to form thematic coding and descriptive statistics. This research was conducted from January to February 2020 in Jakarta. Instruments used in this research include: informed consent, and measurement scale to assess the view of adolescents regarding well-being.

Data were collected using a questionnaire with three open-ended questions and complemented with demographic data of gender and age. Research questions include: "I feel well when …?", "I don't feel well when …?", And "How do I make myself prosperous …?" After all the questionnaires have been collected, participants' responses were inputted in the worksheet and then analyzed by MAXQDA. MAXQDA then coded these responses. First, it looks at how often certain meaningful words appear in participants' responses using WordCloud. The next step is analyzing the relationship between the category / theme patterns identified from the answers in the questionnaire. This step is a part of the axial coding process. Then, the next step is to conduct selective coding, which is the process of integrating and filtering categories into core categories. Researchers can collect, organize, analyze, visualize, and publish research data with the help of MAXQDA. More female participants were involved in this study (85.8%), than male participants.

3. Results

The findings section presents the adolescents' well-being, which are presented in Figure 1.

The perspective of the participants regarding subjective well-being is explained, followed by manifestations or forms of application of subjective well-being in daily activities. For the first question, WordCloud detected a frequent use of the word "productive". This is then followed by analysis at the next sentence level so that it is grouped into productive themes, and so on. After analysis, the coding is categorized into theme groups. Based on the eight themes of events that determine the well-being of the research subject, it was found that the most commonly perceived subjective well-being was the feeling that the self was productive. The following chart summarizes the frequency of events that illustrate adolescents' perceptions of the concept of well-being.

Figure 1. Distribution of adolescents' perception responses on subjective well-being

Based on the eight events that contribute to well-being in the research subjects, it was found that the most commonly perceived subjective well-being was the feeling that the self was

productive. The following charts summarize the frequency of events that illustrate adolescents' perceptions about the concept of well-being.
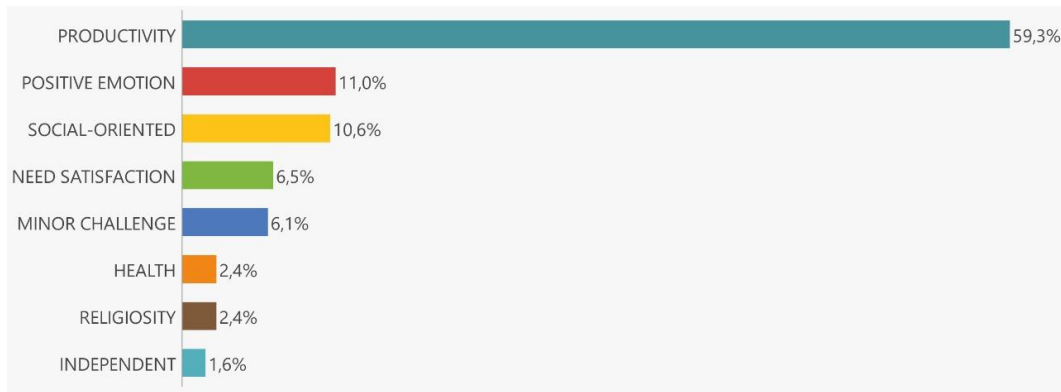
Figure 2. Percentage of adolescents' perception responses on subjective well-being

- Being a productive person is the most central theme perceived by the adolescents.
- The subjective well-being of adolescents is embraced by not only feeling happy but effective.
- Teenagers interpret that having positive emotions is a way to fulfill their well-being.
- When adolescents are able to contribute in their social environment it will make them feel prosperous.

4. Discussion

The frequency that emerges from themes related to adolescents' well-being, will be explained as follows.

Productivity. One theory that discusses the factors that influence subjective well-being is activity theory (Diener, 1984; Diener et al. 2009). This theory was introduced by Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 4), who said that happiness was achieved based on the concept of flow, which is a condition where a person gets pleasure while doing the activities they like. He further explained that the activities that contribute to the flow state are activities that require individuals to learn new abilities, activities that set goals, provide feedback, and learn mastery of the situation. These activities, whether they include competitions, opportunities, or other experiences, provide a feeling of discovery of something new, a creative feeling, and encourage someone to achieve higher performance and achievement than before. Csikzentmihalyi (1990) concluded that these activities always encourage humans to change and develop. The findings of Jackson (1992, 1995) and Moneta (2004) suggest the same thing, that factors such as experience, challenges, and situations influence how a person enjoys their activities. The findings of Martin and Cutler (2002) support this research that the experience factor and the existence of goals to be achieved encourage someone to move. First of all, to understand the concepts that underlie the relationship between productivity and subjective well-being in adolescents, Larson (2000) explains three elements experienced by adolescents, namely (1) the existence of intrinsic motivation that makes teens want to be involved in an activity; (2) this intrinsic motivation then encourages adolescents to carry out concrete activities in their environment, which include a state of attention and concentration; (3) activities that require concentration and attention occur continuously, so there are efforts to achieve goals and set strategies.

Larson (2000) also states that structured activities require adolescents to give concentration and full attention, thus providing high motivation, feelings of life, enthusiasm, and

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positivity to adolescents. Fritz and Avsec (2007) also suggest that activities that are enjoyable, purposeful, and in accordance with students' ability contribute to their subjective well-being. Some types of activities that affect the subjective well-being of adolescents are activities that have aspects of sports (physical), socialization, and personal enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi & Wong, 2014; Stepstoe & Butler, 1996; White et al., 2018; Wong & Csikszentmihalyi, 1991).

Extracurricular activities which include structured activities and provide mental and physical stimulations (Larson & Verma, 1999), were also found to have a positive influence on adolescents' well-being, as well as predicting academic achievement and prosocial behavior (Gilman, 2001; Maton, 1990; Zaff, Moore, Papillo & Williams, 2003). In addition, attending lectures, engaging in organizational activities, and doing voluntary activities also gave positive results to adolescents (Zaff et al., 2003). Zaff et al. (2003) explained that these activities have a positive impact, because it provides an opportunity for adolescents to channel the desire to carry out high-risk activities (sports activities, arts, etc.) in a healthy and productive manner, which in turn also provides experience, skills, interactions, and the feeling of being in a community. Another explanation from Kim, Suh, Kim and Gopalan (2012), explains that engaging in a productive activity is one of the healthy coping ways to deal with stress, because it gives positive feelings such as pleasure and happiness for teenagers. Engaging in productive activities such as organization and extracurricular activities gives teens the opportunity to interact and help others, as well as mitigates isolation and loneliness (Kim et al., 2012).

The thing to note further is the relationship between productivity and happiness that does not take place in one direction only. Several studies have found that when a person has high subjective well-being, their productivity in both work and activities will increase (Ledford, 1999; Sgroi, 2015; Oswald, Proto & Sgroi, 2015; Miller, 2016; Dimaria, Peroni & Sarracino, 2019). According to Diener (1984), much research still needs to be done to provide an explanation of the relationship between productivity and one's subjective well-being.

Positive Emotions. One view of the subjective well-being theory states that, the component of positive emotions or positive affect contributes greatly to one's subjective well-being (Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999; Watson, 1988). Positive affect is defined by Watson (1988) as a pleasant interaction from someone to their environment. This includes positive aspects such as enthusiasm, pleasure, satisfaction, self-esteem, affection, and determination (Diener et al., 1999; Watson, 1988; Watson et al., 1988). Another theory suggests that one's well-being is seen from two different views, one of which is the hedonic view (Keyes, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Hedonic is referred to as a subjective aspect of well-being, which consists of positive and negative emotions (Keyes, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Diener, Sandvik and Pavot (2009) further explained that positive emotions will be more significant when viewed from the frequency or number of times someone feels these positive emotions, compared to their intensity. According to research from Steinmayr et al. (2019), emotions and feelings of adolescents experience many changes, and some adolescents experience an increase in the frequency of their emotions. Research from Keyes (2005), suggests that in adolescence, a person feels an increase in well-being on the basis of emotions, both positive and negative.

Social-Oriented. One social behavior that is said to contribute to one's subjective well-being is prosocial behavior (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010; Wheeler, Gorey & Greenblatt, 1998). Prosocial behavior is one of the behaviors helping to improve a situation without pressure from other parties (Bierhoff, 2002). This prosocial behavior is an action of an individual who has an altruistic personality (Bierhoff, 2002; Evans, Athenstaedt & Krueger, 2013). Altruism itself is motivation to help without expecting anything in return from others (Bierhoff, 2002; Lu, Jiang, Zhao & Fang, 2019). Altruistic personality has several components which include empathy (Bierhoff, 2002; Schroeder, Graziano & Davis, 2015), trust (Evans et al., 2013), social responsibility (Bierhoff, Klein & Kramp, 1991), and social behavior (Lu et al., 2019). In adolescents, several studies have found that traits of individuals who have altruistic personalities

have a strong relationship with positive emotions, which forms subjective well-being of adolescents (Lu et al., 2019; Pareek & Jain, 2012). In addition, other studies suggest that there is substantial relationship between prosocial behavior and interpersonal relationships with others, which is associated with high subjective well-being (Wentzel & McNamara, 1999). Meanwhile, prosocial behavior itself has a major influence on the subjective well-being of adolescents, which contributes to their social orientation (Yang, Li, Fu & Kou, 2016) and their subjective well-being at school (Tian, Du & Huebner, 2014).

Satisfaction Needs. Another theory regarding factors that influence a person's well-being is how a person are able to meet their basic needs (Diener, Osihi & Lucas, 2009). Several studies have proven the relationship between meeting one's needs with the state of well-being (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Diener & Diener, 1995; Diener & Fujita, 1995; Diener & Lucas, 2000; Oishi, Diener, Suh & Lucas, 1999; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006; Turkdogan & Duru, 2012; Tay & Diener, 2011). Some theories have talked about human needs that affect one's well-being. The theory of Maslow (1954) suggests that human needs are universal and constitute a level of hierarchy, which he called the theory of hierarchy of needs (Feist & Feist, 2009). The hierarchy theory has five levels of needs from the most basic to the highest, namely: (a) physiological, basic physical needs; (b) safety, stability, rules, law and physical security guarantees; (c) belonging and love, a relationship with family, friends, and being part of a group; (d) esteem, a sense of respect which includes reputation and confidence; and (e) self-actualization, which is awareness and fulfillment of all potentials (Feist & Feist, 2009). There are several other theories that also state that needs are universal and fundamental in humans, and are things that need to be met for psychological development, especially their well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In self-determination theory, it is stated that basic human needs consist of three aspects, namely competence (the need to feel able), autonomy (the need for autonomy), and relatedness (the need to establish relationships with others; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Whereas in the theory of six-factor models of psychological well-being, there are six main factors that influence a person's well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). These factors are, (a) self-acceptance, which is a positive assessment of oneself and the past; (b) personal growth, that is a sense of sustainable growth and self-development; (c) purpose in life, also known as the belief that one's life is full of purpose and meaning; (d) positive relationship, indicated by having a quality relationship with others; (e) environmental mastery, that is the ability to manage life and the world around it effectively; and (f) autonomy, a sense of self-determination (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Some research on meeting human needs and subjective well-being is based on the needs theories above. Research from Tay and Diener (2011) bases the theory of needs on six categories, namely basic needs for food and shelter, security, social support and affection, feelings of respect, mastery of a field, and independence. This was examined on students, and it was found that the fulfillment of these needs was closely related to positive feelings towards their subjective well-being (Tay & Diener, 2011). In addition, research from Turkdogan and Duru (2012) states that meeting needs, especially independent needs, pleasure needs, and the need for strength, can predict students' subjective well-being levels. Other studies based on self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) state that there is a strong relationship with the balance of the fulfillment of these three needs in students (Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006; Reis et al., 2000).

Minor Challenge. As mentioned earlier, Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 4) states that happiness is achieved based on the concept of flow, which is a state in which a person gets pleasure while doing the activities they like. It was further explained that, an activity will influence the positive feelings of one's subjective well-being, when the individual experiences optimal experiences (Csikszentmihalyi 1990: 72; Delle Fave, 2009; Massimini, Csikszentmihalyi & Delle Fave, 1988). According to the theory of Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 75), the optimal experience is the condition of flow itself, which occurs when there is a high challenge of the activities undertaken,

accompanied by high individual abilities too. It was further explained that the balance between challenges and abilities is very important to achieve flow conditions, with the following conditions: (a) if the challenge is higher than the individual's ability, then the individual will reach the anxiety condition, whereas (b) if the challenge is lower than the ability individual, then the individual will reach boredom condition (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 75; Moneta, 2004; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Health. Several studies have suggested the importance of the role of subjective well-being on one's health (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Dolan & White, 2007; Matsumoto & Juang, 2013). However, the relationship between health and subjective well-being is apparently more complex. Here are some studies that try to explain the relationship of health with one's subjective well-being.

Religiosity. Religion is a forum for humans who strive to find meaningful paths in achieving a sacred goal (Pargament, 1999). While religiosity, or spirituality, is the essence of religion, namely how a person thinks, feels, and interprets something related to a holy perspective (Pargament, 1999). Emmons, Cheung and Tehrani (1998) suggest the importance of how to measure religiosity to see its effect on mental health. In adolescents, several studies have found a positive relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being, as well as a negative relationship with depression (Abdel-Khalek, 2009; Abdel-Khalek, 2010; Abdel-Khalek, 2012; Abdel-Khalek & Eid, 2011; Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2010; Rew & Wong, 2006).

Independence and Autonomy. One aspect of needs theory, such as self-determination theory and six-factor models of psychology well-being, includes a sense of autonomy that plays a role in achieving one's subjective well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Autonomy is a state of self-regulation which is on the same dimension with independence, namely the ability to care for oneself (Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Autonomy is a factor that is said to have a stronger relationship with subjective well-being with increasing age (Sheldon, Kasser, Houser-Marko, Jones & Turban, 2005). In addition, the positive relationship between autonomy and subjective well-being is proven to be universal, which applies to all people in the world with different cultures (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Tian, Chen & Huebner, 2013; Yu, Levesque-Bristol & Maeda, 2017). Meanwhile, in adolescence is also said to be a transitional period that causes tension, because adolescents are trapped between feelings of autonomy with feelings of attachment to parents (Krins, Beyers, Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2009; McElhaney, Allen, Stephenson & Hare, 2009). Adams and Shea (1979) add that adolescents' independence plays an important role in the search for their identity.

5. Conclusion

This research uses a qualitative survey approach to study adolescent subjective well-being and the background. This article demonstrated how one measures opinions. The results of this study is that adolescents as research participants have a variety of perspectives in interpreting subjective well-being including productivity, positive emotion, social oriented, need satisfaction, minor challenges, health, religiosity, and independence. Productivity and positive emotions get the highest frequency related to well-being as expressed by adolescents.

Constraints related to subjective well-being should be overcome, such as the limited samples, other demographic settings that can still be explored as well as variations in research methods. However, because research on subjective well-being can contribute to core theoretical questions about the meaning, values and perspectives of adolescents regarding conditions that make them feel prosperous, this research uses an analytic approach of constant comparative techniques, comparison of ranking order, and visual representation of coding, using MAXQDA, which the triangulation method be used in the future. This study explores subjective well-being

subjectively from the perspective of adolescents. Meanwhile, it could be that in the future, other studies will produce more objective findings not only in one context of the stages of human development, but are multidimensional in nature and deserve to be studied more carefully.

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