

A comparative study of loneliness from psychological well being as predictor of mental health students living in dormitories: A cross cultural study

Studi komparasi kesepian ditinjau dari kesejahteraan psikologis sebagai prediktor kesehatan mental mahasiswa di asrama: A cross cultural study

Amalia Nadhilah, Sri Nugroho Jati, Vidyastuti

Universitas Muhammadiyah Pontianak
Jl. Jenderal Ahmad Yani

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ABSTRACT

This cross-cultural study looked at levels of loneliness that reviewed psychological well-being as a predictor of mental health in students in Indonesia and Malaysia living at the Asrama. Loneliness Statistics states that 43% of 17-25-year-olds feel loneliness and psychological well-being as one of the predictive factors of the level of loneliness. Interviews showed that students felt lonely due to differences and changes in the environment. Feeling alone, hard to adapt, and incapable of growing. A total of 235 Indonesian and Malaysian students live in dorms. Instrument scale with loneliness and psychological well-being. Purposive sampling technique. Independent sample t-test for comparative data analysis of lonely Indonesian and Malaysian students living in dorms. Regression test to see impact of psychological well-being on loneliness. While Malaysian and Indonesian students reported comparable levels of loneliness, the study also discovered that psychological well-being had an impact on loneliness. The implications of this research are that by understanding the importance of improving understanding and implementing psychological well-being effectively, students can overcome feelings, situations and conditions that cause loneliness and have a healthy mentality.

ABSTRACT

Penelitian *cross-cultural* ini untuk melihat tingkat kesepian yang ditinjau kesejahteraan psikologis sebagai prediktor kesehatan mental pada mahasiswa di Indonesia dan Malaysia yang tinggal di Asrama. *Loneliness Statistics* menyatakan bahwa 43% yang berusia 17-25 tahun merasa kesepian dan kesejahteraan psikologis menjadi salah satu faktor yang memprediksi tingkat kesepian. Wawancara awal menunjukkan mahasiswa merasa kesepian akibat adanya perbedaan dan perubahan lingkungan. Perasaan terasingkan, sulit beradaptasi, tidak percaya diri dan tidak mampu mengembangkan diri. Sebanyak 235 mahasiswa Indonesia dan Malaysia tinggal di asrama dilibatkan. Instrumen dengan skala kesepian dan kesejahteraan psikologis. Teknik pengambilan dengan *purposive sampling*. Metode independent sample t-test untuk analisis data perbandingan kesepian mahasiswa Indonesia dan Malaysia yang tinggal di asrama. Serta, uji regresi untuk melihat pengaruh kesejahteraan psikologis terhadap kesepian. Hasil penelitian menemukan adanya persamaan pada tingkat kesepian mahasiswa Malaysia maupun Indonesia namun ditemukan kesejahteraan psikologis berpengaruh pada kesepian. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menghasilkan bahwa memahami pentingnya meningkatkan pemahaman dan penerapan kesejahteraan psikologis secara efektif, sehingga mahasiswa bisa mengatasi perasaan, situasi dan kondisi yang menyebabkan kesepian serta memiliki mental yang sehat.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a significant concern in various aspects of life. The Ipsos Global Health Service Monitor survey revealed that 44% of respondents from 31 countries consider mental health as one of the most pressing health issues (Institut de Publique Sondage d'Opinion Secteur, 2023). In Indonesia, the National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS) found that one in three children aged 10-17 experienced mental health issues in the past 12 months (Wilopo, 2022). Similarly, Malaysia also faces mental health challenges; according to a Rakuten Insight survey, 59% of respondents aged 16-24 in Malaysia reported high levels of stress and anxiety (Research, 2023). These data highlight that mental health is a crucial component of a good quality of life and significantly impacts students.

Loneliness is one of the challenges in life, often triggering poor mental health, especially among students. This is due to the transitional period they are in, dealing with complex problems (Farmasita & Wilantika, 2023). Changes in living arrangements also contribute to the risk of loneliness (Diehl et al., 2018). For instance, when social bonds do not meet expectations, it can lead to feelings of insecurity and discomfort (Marisa & Afriyeni, 2019). Research by Shofwatun Amaliyah (2024) found that 89 out of 110 students living in dormitories felt lonely due to an environment that made it difficult for them to form close friendships. This is supported by Resmadewi's (2019) research, which showed that dormitory environments can lead to feelings of conflict and rejection among students.

Different environments affect interactions in forming social relationships. Hidayati (2015) noted that loneliness is an unpleasant subjective experience when social relationships are in unsupportive situations. Furthermore, loneliness is often accompanied by anxiety, lack of confidence, discomfort, dissatisfaction, and even depression as expressions of negative emotions (Hartati, 2014; Wicaksana & Rachman, 2018). As Bruno (2000) stated, aspects of loneliness include fear of self-disclosure, lack of confidence, feeling isolated, worthless, unworthy of love, discomfort, and boredom at times (Dayakisni, 2009). Research by Simanjuntak et al. (2021) shows that the level of psychological well-being, as a component of psychological resources, can be a measure to predict the level of loneliness.

The low level of psychological well-being in students is a phenomenon that also occurs in several countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia, face significant mental health issues. Widyawati et al. (2022) reveal that factors affecting psychological well-being include differences in gender, age, and cultural background. In Asian countries, such as Malaysia, mental health problems impacting students' psychological well-being are related to financial issues, social relationships, and academic challenges (Salam et al., 2015). In Indonesia, research by Goldin et al. (2014) ranks psychological well-being at 19 out of 30 countries. This may be due to various factors, including social status, age, cultural differences, economic level, gender, and perceptions of life experiences (Wibowo & Mulawarman, 2022).

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The cultural conditions in Indonesia and Malaysia also influence psychological well-being. Malaysia, with its friendly society, does not tolerate bad habits, so behaviors are closely monitored in its culture (Tusilawati, 2014). On the other hand, Indonesia's sociable and friendly environment is seen as taboo by Malaysia, which prefers orderly and rule-abiding interactions (Jusmika et al., 2022). Psychological well-being in Indonesia is positively influenced by meeting living standards, social connections, religiosity, spirituality, feelings of safety, lifestyle, health, achievements, and ethics (Abidin & Ariyanti, 2022). In Malaysia, psychological well-being includes engaging in enjoyable activities and financial stability (Eva et al., 2020).

Research on psychological well-being and loneliness has found that psychological well-being significantly affects the loneliness experienced by students, with aspects such as self-acceptance, positive relationships, environmental control, and self-development playing a role, regardless of race, ethnicity, or social class (Renata & Nur, 2023). Previous research by Karl Peltzer and Supa Pengpid found that adolescents in ASEAN countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia, reported 7.8% always feeling lonely and 31.3% sometimes feeling lonely (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2017). Consequently, this study aims to update by using a comparative cross-cultural approach to highlight differences in loneliness levels between students in Malaysia and Indonesia, influenced by psychological well-being. Thus, the hypothesis is that there are differences in loneliness levels between Malaysian and Indonesian students, with psychological well-being affecting these levels.

Based on interviews with three students from Indonesia and Malaysia on November 9, 2023, conducted online, it was found that loneliness arises from differences and changes in environment, as well as feelings of alienation, self-doubt, dependence on others, lack of social relationships, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation. These initial interview results support the study, as they indicate that students living in dormitories struggle to reduce loneliness due to difficulties adapting to the environment and unmet basic needs. Ultimately, this study can serve as a basis for predicting dimensions of psychological well-being and loneliness.

2. METHODS

This research uses statistical methods for data management. It employs a comparative design to determine the differences in loneliness levels between Malaysian and Indonesian students. The study uses two variables: psychological well-being as variable (X) and loneliness as variable (Y). Before analyzing the data, normality and linearity assumption tests are conducted.

The sample size is determined based on Roscoe's formula, which states that the sample size should be between $n > 30$ and $n < 500$ (Azwar, 2017). Thus, the population and sample for this study are Malaysian and Indonesian students, with a total of 235 participants.

Sampling is performed using purposive sampling, which selects samples based on specific characteristics. The sample characteristics in this study are Malaysian and Indonesian students living in dormitories, both male and female, actively enrolled in university, and aged 17-24 years.

The research instruments include a modified loneliness scale from Bruno (2000) and a psychological well-being scale from Ryff (1995). A preliminary test of the scale was conducted with 30 subjects to obtain reliability and validity results before proceeding to the main study. Validity is assessed through content validity by a supervising lecturer. Reliability is tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The results of the analysis provide a reliable tool for data collection. Data collection is done using Google Forms with informed consent obtained before participation.

Data analysis involves an independent sample t-test to compare loneliness between Malaysian and Indonesian students, followed by simple linear regression to examine the effect of psychological well-being on loneliness using SPSS 24.0.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

This study used 30 respondents for the trial of the measuring instrument. The results showed that out of 64 items tested, there were 58 valid items on the loneliness instrument with a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.960. In the psychological well-being variable, out of 60 items tested, there were 47 items declared valid with a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.958. After the data was collected, a descriptive analysis of the data was carried out to see the distribution of the categorization of the research variables. The results of descriptive statistics are as follows:

Table 1 Empirical Score

Variables	N	Min	Max	SD
Loneliness (Indonesia)	152	65	209	20,55
Psychological well-being (Indonesia)	152	80	179	16,95
Loneliness (Malaysia)	83	76	195	18,98
Psychological well-being (Malaysia)	83	98	174	13,62

Table 1 shows psychological well-being and loneliness in Indonesian and Malaysian students obtained from empirical scores.

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Table 2 Hypothetical Score

Variables	N	Min	Max	SD
Loneliness (Indonesia)	152	58	232	145
Psychological well-being (Indonesia)	152	47	188	117,5
Loneliness (Malaysia)	83	58	232	145
Psychological well-being (Malaysia)	83	47	188	117,5

Table 2 shows psychological well-being and loneliness in Indonesian and Malaysian students obtained from hypothetical scores. So in table 1 and table 2 shows loneliness in Indonesian and Malaysian students obtained differences in the mean hypothetical score > empirical score and this means that respondents have a low level of loneliness. In psychological well-being, the mean empirical score > hypothetical score, it can be interpreted that the level of psychological well-being of respondents tends to be high.

Table 3 Categorization of Loneliness in Indonesia

Categories	Description	Scores	F	%
Low	$X < M - SD$	$X < 116$	23	15,1 %
Medium	$M - SD \leq X \leq M + SD$	$116 \leq X \leq 174$	123	80,9%
High	$M + SD \leq X$	$\leq X 174$	6	3.9 %

Table 3 shows that as many as 152 Indonesian students in the loneliness variable are in the medium category (80.9%). Meanwhile, 15.1% are in the low category, while only 3.9% are in the high category.

Table 4 Categorization of Psychological Well-being in Indonesia

Categories	Description	Scores	F	%
Low	$X < M - SD$	$X < 116$	2	1,3 %
Medium	$M - SD \leq X \leq M + SD$	$116 \leq X \leq 174$	124	81,6 %
High	$M + SD \leq X$	$\leq X 174$	26	26 %

Table 4 shows that as many as 152 Indonesian students in the psychological well-being variable are in the medium category (81.6%). Meanwhile, 1.3% are in the low category, while only 26% are in the high category.

Table 5 Categorization of Loneliness in Malaysia

Categories	Description	Scores	F	%
Low	$x < M - SD$	$x < 116$	10	11,4
Medium	$M - SD \leq x \leq M + SD$	$116 \leq x \leq 174$	73	88,6
High	$M + SD \leq x$	$\leq x 174$	-	-

Table 5 shows that as many as 83 Malaysian students in the loneliness variable are in the medium category (88.6%). Meanwhile, 11.4% are in the high category.

Table 6. of Psychological Well-being in Malaysia

Categories	Description	Scores	F	%
Low	$X < M - SD$	$X < 116$	-	-
Medium	$M - SD \leq X \leq M + SD$	$116 \leq X \leq 174$	80	94,3%
High	$M + SD \leq X$	$\leq X 174$	3	5,7%

Table 6 shows that as many as 83 Malaysian students in the psychological well-being variable are in the medium category, which is 94.3%. Meanwhile, only 5.7% are in the high category.

The results presented in Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 show the categorization of subjects based on the mean and hypothetical standard deviation. For both variables, the majority fall into the moderate category. For the loneliness variable, 83 Malaysian students fall into the moderate category at 88.6%, while 152 Indonesian students also fall into the moderate category at 80.7%. For the psychological well-being variable, 83 Malaysian students fall into the moderate category at 94.3%, and 152 Indonesian students also fall into the moderate category at 81.6%.

Table 7 Kolmogorov Smirnov Normality Test

Variables	Statistics	df	Sig
Loneliness (Indonesia)	0.058	152	0.200
Psychological well-being (Indonesia)	0.064	152	0.200
Loneliness (Malaysia)	0.093	83	0.200
Psychological well-being (Malaysia)	0.085	83	0.200

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Table 7 shows the results of the significance value of the normality test of the loneliness and psychological well-being variables in Indonesia and Malaysia $0.2 > 0.05$. This means that loneliness and psychological well-being are normally distributed so that they meet the regression assumption test and subsequent data analysis tests.

Table 8 Linearity Test

Models	Sig	Descriptions
Loneliness*Psychological Wellbeing Indonesia	0.000	Linear
Loneliness*Psychological Wellbeing Malaysia	0.000	Linear

Table 8 shows that both variables have a significance of 0.000. In addition, it also shows a result of $p < 0.05$, meaning that there is a linear relationship between the variables of loneliness and psychological well-being.

Table 9 Simple Regression Test

Models	F	Sig.
Loneliness*Psychological Wellbeing Indonesia	106.734	0.000
Loneliness*Psychological Wellbeing Malaysia	15.502	0.000

Table 9 shows the results of a simple regression test, namely that the F count in Indonesia is 15.502 and in Malaysia 106.734, significance $0.00 < 0.05$. This means that psychological well-being simultaneously affects loneliness..

Table 10 Variable Coefficient

Models	B	Std Error	T	Sig.
(Constant)	241.12	10.299	29.43	0.000
Loneliness*Psychological Wellbeing Indonesia	-0.838	.081	-10.33	
(Constant)	488.56	10.6	5.40	0.000
Loneliness*Psychological Wellbeing Malaysia	-170.91	.080	-3.94	

Table 10 shows consistent results of the participation variable of 241.12 in Indonesia and 488.56 in Malaysia. The regression coefficient is negative, in Malaysia it is -170.91 and in Indonesia -0.838. The negative value indicates that the higher the level of loneliness, the lower the psychological well-being experienced. Likewise, if the level of loneliness decreases, the level of psychological well-being of students is high.

Table 11 Regression Analysis

Models	R Square
Loneliness*Psychological Wellbeing Indonesia	0.645
Loneliness*Psychological Wellbeing Malaysia	0.401

Table 11 shows the percentage of loneliness reviewed from the psychological well-being of Malaysian students; this can be seen from the R Square table which is 0.401. This result shows that psychological well-being has an effect on loneliness of 40.1%. The percentage of Indonesian students is 0.645, this value is defined that psychological well-being has an effect on loneliness of 64.5%.

Table 12 Independent Sample Test

Variables	T	Sig.(2-tailed)
Loneliness	-1.328	0.186

Table 12 shows the research hypothesis. The researcher used the significance decision on the Independent Sample Test. From the analysis results, the value of $t = -1.328$ was obtained with a significance of $0.186 > 0.01$. This result answers the hypothesis that the hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is no difference in loneliness between Indonesian and Malaysian students.

DISCUSSION

This study is a comparative study using subjects from two countries, Indonesia and Malaysia. The results of the independent sample test show a significance of $0.186 > 0.05$, which means the hypothesis of this study is rejected. This implies that there is no difference in loneliness between Malaysian and Indonesian students. The lack of difference might be due to several other factors, such as those mentioned by Wright & Silard (2020), such as the inability to handle personal issues, which disrupts developmental stages, as well as a lack of close relationships, experiences of separation, and social marginality. The hypothesis was not proven likely because the cross-cultural subjects mostly share cultural similarities, interaction patterns, and habits, so factors affecting loneliness dimensions do not differentiate between the loneliness experienced by Malaysian and Indonesian students. This study's results align with Peltzer and Pengpid's (2017) research showing similar loneliness among Malaysian and Indonesian students. This is due to subjective socio-economic status, which does not clearly reveal factors explaining differences in loneliness prevalence between Indonesia and Malaysia, which are both ASEAN countries. Furthermore, no difference was found because correlation tests show that loneliness levels are influenced by the high psychological well-being of Malaysian and Indonesian students living in dormitories.

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Based on the categorization of loneliness variables, both Malaysian and Indonesian students are in the moderate category. Variable analysis also shows that there is a difficulty in forming friendships in the social environment and interacting with emotional closeness, accompanied by feelings of always being in an inappropriate environment, making it hard to be confident. This is supported by Rahmi (2015) who states that loneliness can lead individuals to feel unpleasant, resulting in negative emotions and a mismatch between social relationships and desired relationships. The categorization of loneliness variables also shows that only 11.4% of Malaysian students and 15% of Indonesian students fall into the low category. Students with low loneliness feelings mean they can adapt and regulate themselves well to their environment. As in previous research, Hartati (2014) states that people with low loneliness are ready to build interactions with others with good communication skills.

The correlation coefficient test results also show an influence of psychological well-being on loneliness. Indonesian students have a regression coefficient X of -0.838 , while Malaysian students have -170.12 with a significance of $0.00 < 0.05$. These negative values indicate that higher loneliness is experienced by students due to lower psychological well-being, and conversely, lower loneliness is due to higher psychological well-being experienced by Malaysian and Indonesian students living in dormitories. Thus, students with good psychological well-being are more likely to avoid loneliness. According to previous research, this finding supports the idea that there is a significant correlation between psychological well-being and student loneliness, meaning that better psychological well-being results in lower loneliness (Rantepadang & Gery, 2020). The similarity in results ultimately shows that psychological well-being can be used as a measure to predict the levels of loneliness experienced.

The categorization of psychological well-being variables for both groups is at a moderate level: 80.3% for Indonesian students and 90.8% for Malaysian students. This indicates that most Malaysian and Indonesian students simultaneously have self-acceptance and the ability to utilize available opportunities and overcome obstacles to develop their potential. Previous research supports this finding that someone with good mental health not only has positive thoughts but also can accept themselves, confidently build interactions with others, and has high motivation to develop (Akhtar & Kroener-Herwig, 2019). Furthermore, 26% of Indonesian students and 5.7% of Malaysian students have high psychological well-being, meaning they can fulfill all dimensions of psychological well-being. This result is consistent with research by Yulistyowati & Savira (2022), which shows that high levels of psychological well-being enable students to better accept themselves, have goals, and build good connections with others.

The regression analysis results show that the influence of psychological well-being on loneliness is greater among Indonesian students compared to Malaysians. The correlation coefficient R shows that psychological well-being affects loneliness levels by 0.645 or 64.5%, while 40.3% is influenced by other variables among Indonesian students. Psychological well-

being can influence changes in loneliness levels by 0.401 or 40.1%, while 62.7% is influenced by other variables. Other variables that can affect loneliness include support, social status, friendships, environment, need for affiliation, and status similarities (Pratiwi & Asih, 2019).

4. CONCLUSION

Meskipun perbedaan loneliness pada mahasiswa Malaysia dan Indonesia tidak ditemukan, penelitian ini telah Finding psychological well-being has an effect on the level of loneliness. In the correlation test, psychological well-being significantly affects the loneliness experienced by Malaysian and Indonesian students living in dormitories. Ultimately, the dimensions of psychological well-being will affect the level of loneliness. Several factors also contribute to loneliness, such as lack of self-confidence and difficulty adapting.

Suggestions for this research include that to achieve better psychological conditions, students need to better understand themselves to have clear life directions and goals. Students should also become more self-confident, such as by actively participating in organizations. Additionally, they should learn how to engage in various activities with the hope of reducing loneliness. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate other variables and factors that might affect loneliness and efforts that can be made for students experiencing loneliness. This way, possible interventions as preventive measures can be tailored to more specific situations.

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