

Personality, Subjective Well-Being of Senior Citizens, and Their Living Arrangements

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It was doubtful that subjective well-being (SWB) of senior citizens who lived together with family was better than those who did not. It was assumed that there was correlation between SWB, personality, and a place where they live. Participants of this study were 30 senior citizens; 10 individuals lived with family, 10 individuals lived alone, and 10 individuals lived in foster home. Data was collected through The Big Five Inventory Personality Test combined with Satisfaction with Life Scale and The Affect Balance Scale. Hypothesis was tested with product moment correlation and one way ANOVA. Results show that only extraversion has a significant correlation with SWB ($p < 0.05$), and there is not any significant difference on SWB senior citizen based upon where they live ($p > 0.05$). Extraversion profile contributes 16.2% on SWB. Other factors' contribution is discussed further.

Key words: well-being, personality, living arrangement, senior citizen

Diragukan bahwa kesejahteraan subjektif (*subjective well-being* = SWB) pada lansia yang tinggal bersama keluarga lebih baik daripada yang tidak tinggal bersama keluarga. Diduga ada keterkaitan SWB, kepribadian dan tempat tinggal lansia. Partisipan penelitian adalah 30 lansia: 10 tinggal bersama keluarga, 10 tinggal sendiri, dan 10 tinggal di panti werdha. Data diperoleh melalui *The Big Five Inventory Personality Test* dan kombinasi *Satisfaction with Life Scale* dan *The Affect Balance Scale*. Pengujian hipotesis dengan korelasi *product moment* dan *one way ANOVA*. Hasil menunjukkan hanya profil *extraversion* berhubungan signifikan dengan SWB ($p < .05$), serta tidak ada perbedaan SWB lansia berdasarkan tempat tinggalnya ($p > .05$). Profil *extraversion* memberikan sumbangan 16.2% terhadap SWB. Dibahas lebih lanjut faktor-faktor lain yang menyumbang SWB

Kata kunci: kesejahteraan, kepribadian, tempat tinggal, lansia

To live an optimal and happy senior life is what everybody's obsession. Senior citizens who can go on living with physically, socially, and cognitively healthy are called to live a happy senior life (Faber, Wiel, Exel, Gussekloo, Lagaay, Dongen, Knook, Geest, & Westendorp, 2001). So, successful senior life consists not only physical but also psychological, social and well-being. According to Diener, Suh, & Oishi (1997), SWH is an evaluation on the way people think about their personal lives that consists of two aspects; namely the cognitive aspect dealing with life satisfaction, and the affective aspect dealing with positive or negative emotional experience. Among other things, the components of SWB are satisfaction, presence of frequent positive effect, and relative absence of negative affect (Diener, et.al, 1997).

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Senior life is a period away from previous fruitful and enjoyable life (Hurlock, 1980). Santrock (2002) stated that it began from 60 years old and more. Bee (1996) classified period of senior lives into two stages; late adulthood (65 – 75 years old) and *late adulthood* (75 years old – pass away). Beginning from late adulthood, physical as well as cognitive aspects are slowing down followed by a dramatic change of function so that it needs some adjustment. Besides physical and psychological slowing down, there is a negative perspective from the society toward old generation (Yastroki, 2008) that makes people afraid of getting old. There is a tendency that old generation is considered as the out going generation which is socioeconomically unproductive and does not need to be taken care of (Achir, 1986). According to Hurlock (1991), negative social attitude as well as inconsiderate thought toward senior citizen make them minority group. Kuntjoro (2002) revealed many negative perspectives also caused

many senior citizen develop negative self concept, withdraw from social interaction, loneliness and unhappiness. So, SWB was important and interesting to be studied in connection with the problems.

Many factors influence Subjective Well Being. Eddington & Shuman (2005) stated demographic and environmental factors that influence individual's health and well being; namely gender, age, education, income, marriage status, religion, job satisfaction, spare time, live events, and competence.

Fonad, Wahlin, Heikkila & Emami (2006) showed that living arrangements had a significant effect on subjective well being of senior citizen. Chen & Short (2008) revealed that living arrangements had a strong implication on emotional well being of senior citizen.

Majority of people think that senior citizens would be happier if they lived together with their families compared those who lived alone or in foster homes. Eastern culture wishes for offspring to take care of their old parents as a token of dedication. Study by Chen & Short (2008) clearly indicated that senior citizens who lived alone were associated with low SBW while citizens who live with their close families were associated with positive SWB, but in fact not all senior citizens are happy to live with their families.

According to Probosuseno (2007), majority of senior citizens living in foster homes felt lonely and not being taken care of, because they were away from families and friends. In fact, old people could live happily although they live in foster homes. So, residence is not the only factor that influences SWB in senior citizens. Preliminary survey indicated that variation in SWB showed that SWB was closely linked with personality characteristics.

Costa, Magnus & Diener (in Eddington & Shuman, 2005) showed that personality was a significant factor which affected SWB. Personality is defined as individual's behavior and habit used to react and adapt himself to inner and outer stimulus. It consists of trait and type. Psychological approach with Big Five Personality intended to see personality traits that consist of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experiences (McCrae & Costa, 1997).

Costa and McCrae (cited in Bee, 1996) revealed that personality affects life satisfaction. Old people with high score in neuroticism are consistently dissatisfied with their lives, whereas people with high score in extraversion more satisfied. Evaluation of neuroticism and extraversion in old people can predict satisfaction and happiness up to 10 – 20 years ahead.

It was interesting to study relationship between well being, personality and living arrangement, to see which

personality profile is correlated with well being in connection with living arrangement.

Method

Measurement of personality by questionnaire was done by adding scores of personality aspect of the participants so that total score was acquired. The higher the score the higher the personality characteristics an individual has.

Five aspects of personality; namely Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism dan Openness to experience was measured using adapted version of The Big Five Inventory Personality Test (John & Srivastava, as cited in Pervin & John, 1999).

Subjective well being was individual's viewpoint and evaluation about his life, consists of several aspects; namely life satisfaction, presence of positive affect (pleasant affect) and relative absence of negative affect (low levels of unpleasant affect) (Diener, Suh, & Oishi, 1997). The higher the score the more satisfied and happy an individual is, and the less he experiences negative emotion. The lower the score the less satisfied and happy an individual is, and the less he experiences positive emotion.

The SWB questionnaire was a combination and adaptation of Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener (cited in Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) and The Affect Balance Scale developed by Bradburn (in McDowell & Newell, 1996). Subjective well being questionnaire consisted of three aspects; satisfaction, presence of frequent positive affect, and relative absence of negative affect.

Participants

Population of this study was senior citizens who lived in foster home in Surabaya, those who lived with their families (children, grandchildren or other families), and those who lived alone. Sampling was done through incidental purposive sampling, in which participants were chosen by foster home with certain characteristics; age over 60 years old, able to communicate, used to be married, able to eat, take a bath, change clothes without help or self sufficient. Thirty participants was chosen, consisted of ten senior citizens who lived in foster home, ten who lived with families, and ten who lived alone.

Data Analysis

Product moment non parametric statistics was used to see relationship between each personality profile, and

anova AB nonparametric was used to see differences in SWB from living arrangement viewpoint.

Results and Discussion

There is not any significant difference in SWB from living arrangement viewpoint ($p > .05$). This happens because a) financial condition of foster home, offspring, or senior citizens themselves are quite good, so SWB tend to be high (76.66%), b) there are many religious activities done by participants, c) there is leisure time to do some activities so that they do not get bored, d) there are positive perception, relation, and communication with families and friends, e) good physical condition, f) marital status, g) social comparison happens to senior citizens who live in foster home, h) good process of adaptation, i) they choose where to live by their own choice. Senior citizens who lived with their families, alone, or in foster home (43.33%) have an average to high SWB

Personality profile that has a significant correlation with SWB is extraversion ($p = .027$). Individual who has a high score in extraversion tends to be easy to socialize, care taking, friendly, easy to interact with other people, warm, and has high spirit. These characteristics cause high SWB. Social connectedness is a unique construct that links extraversion and SWB (Lee, Dean, & Jung, 2008)

Extraversion is also closely linked to friend satisfaction and life satisfaction (Heady, Veenhoven, & Weari, 1990). People who are friendly and easy to interact with other people possibly get better social support. Social support is crucial because there is physical, psychological, cognitive, and behavioral degeneration in old age (Hurlock, 1980). Social support is needed for psychological health and coping (Lahey & Lutz, as cited in Sheldon & Hoon, 2006).

This study shows that only extraversion has correlation with SWB, in contrast to studies in the West. The majority of research in the West showed that neuroticism and extraversion were correlated with SWB. Vitterso and Nilsen (2001) stated that neuroticism was a better predictor toward SWB than extraversion. Chico (2006) also showed that 44% of SWB variance came from neuroticism, and only 8% variance came from extraversion. This happened because Western culture tended to be modern and individualistic centered, while Eastern culture tended to be traditional and group-centered.

The tendency of Western people to be individualistic was defined as introversion attitude by Jung. According to Lee, Dean, & Jung (2008), introversion attitude leads to subjective experience, inner world centered; reality in

the form of empirical observation tends to be quiet, solitary, not polite, and even anti social. Generally introverted individuals like to be introspective and busy with their internal life. They watch the outside world selectively, and use their subjective thinking. So, introverted individuals tend to have neuroticism personality profile.

Lynn and Steel (2006) also showed that *neuroticism* degrade level of life satisfaction and affect introverted individuals rather than extraverted individuals. Sheldon and Hoon (2006) revealed that negative correlation between *neuroticism* and SWB is lower in Singapore (Eastern Culture) than in the U.S. (Western culture). *Cultural membership* gave unique contribution to SWB, especially the relationship pattern.

There is no correlation between *neuroticism* and SWB ($p = .186$). Eastern culture tends to be collective leading to extraversion than to neuroticism. Neuroticism has a correlation with negative affect, but neuroticism has no correlation with positive affect of old and very old individuals, whereas there is no correlation between negative affect and age (Issacowitz & Smith, 2003).

Gutierrez, Jimenez, Hernandez, and Puente (2004) stated that age was correlated with positive affect, supported by Diener & Suh and Stacey & Gatz (in Gutierrez, et.al, 2004) that revealed a little lowering of positive affect with age. Root, Joop, D'Heureuse, and Becker (2006) also stated that there was no negative correlation between neuroticism and valuation of life. Furthermore, less self awareness to emotional condition in Indonesian people indicates that there is no correlation between neuroticism and SWB.

Agreeableness is also uncorrelated with subjective well-being ($p = .355$). People with high agreeableness have the characteristics of eager to help others, loving, courteous, giving away, tend to agree with others. Agreeableness is supposed to contribute to well being, but if there is interpersonal conflict, their self esteem tends to go down and withdraw from conflict, and this will lower well being in return.

There is no correlation between conscientiousness and SWB ($p = .246$). Dominant conscientiousness has a well organized characteristics, will to achieve, being on time, goal centered, firm, following rules and norms, tend to give priority to tasks. Conscientiousness character is able to form positive interpersonal experience with social environment leading to increasing SWB, but conscientiousness character also have negative sides; ambitious, perfectionist, compulsive, workaholic, and boring. Conscientiousness people tend to lower their SWB if their goal or plan is not achieved.

Openness to experience has no correlation with subjective well-being ($p = .599$). People with openness

of experience profile dominantly have active imagination, interest in diversity, like to find something new, have a good curiosity, open to experience so that it is easier to get a solution of any problem. These characters make individuals experience positive experience and accept any change in the environment leading to SWB, but they tend to show off, egocentric, tell their experiences in the wrong time. Gutierrez, et al. (2004) revealed that openness to experience leads someone to experience positive as well as negative emotion.

To feel being able to do something is important for senior citizens and it affect SWB as well. Crosstab between life goal and SWB shows that old people who still have life goals tend to have high SWB than those who do not or even want just to die. To feel being able to do something makes people feel that they are still useful to others leading to high SWB.

Conclusion

Results of this study give a new angle on SWB of senior citizens. It needs a balance of internal and external factors to get a high SWB. Internal factors are personality characteristics that enable the possibility of achieving social satisfaction. But on the contrary, external factors needs to be given attention to support the stability of achieved SWB.

In the effort to increase SWB, personality characteristics, physical as well as environmental and social condition should be attended. Intervention based on physical, psychological, and social components would be successful in dealing with problem and situation.

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