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The Effect of Religious Coping and Optimism on Psychological Well-Being among the Final-Year Undergraduate Students

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Abstract. Psychological well-being (PWB) is a desirable condition for college students as it enhances the quality of their studies. Conversely, low psychological well-being can impede their learning process. This study aims to analyze the effect of religious coping and optimism on PWB, and the combined effect of religious coping and optimism on PWB. We employed a cross-sectional study design, and 202 final year students participated by completing the Psychological Wellbeing Scale, The Brief RCOPE, and the Life Orientation Test - Revised (LOT-R). Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The study found that religious coping and optimism have a partial effect on psychological well-being. Furthermore, the combined analysis yielded significant results. These findings have implications regarding the importance of attention to final year students. College/university administrators need to formulate prevention and intervention programs for students with impaired psychological well-being. Moreover, counseling services provided by professional counselors need to be maximized.

Keyword: Psychological Well-Being, Religious Coping, Optimism

Introduction

College students are a vulnerable group to experiencing psychological problems because they are undergoing a transition from adolescence to adulthood (Santrock, 2019). They are faced with demands to complete academic tasks, adapt to a new social environment, and explore their identity and life goals. Some common psychological problems experienced by students include stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and internet addiction (Dinis & Bragança, 2018; C. Liu et al., 2007; Vijay Mahadeorao Bhujade, 2017). Stress can be caused by high academic pressure, conflicts with friends or family, and financial problems (Peters, McEwen, & Friston, 2017). Anxiety may arise from feeling insecure or uncertain about the future, as well as fear of evaluation by others (Bandelow, Michaelis, & Wedekind, 2017). Depression can be caused by various factors such as excessive academic pressure, lack of social support, or problems in interpersonal relationships (Kapfhammer, 2006).

Psychological problems can have a significant impact on students and their ability to function well on campus and in everyday life. One danger of psychological problems in students is a decline in academic quality (Hyseni Duraku & Hoxha, 2018). Psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and stress can disrupt students' ability to concentrate and learn effectively. As a result, they may experience a decline in academic quality and poor performance. In addition, students may lose motivation (Pascoe, Hetrick, & Parker, 2020). Students experiencing psychological problems may lose motivation to learn and achieve their academic goals. This can hinder their progress in college and even cause them to give up. They are also vulnerable to physical health problems (Poms,

Fleming, & Jacobsen, 2016). In more severe stages, psychological disorders have an influence on the desire to commit suicide (Furr, Westefeld, McConnell, & Jenkins, 2001).

These problems indicate that students experience disruptions in psychological well-being (PWB). PWB is a concept related to a person's mental and emotional condition resulting from their perception of their life as a whole (Holman, Johnson, & O'Connor, 2018). This concept includes various aspects, including life satisfaction, happiness, positive feelings, and the ability to cope with stress (Weiss, Westerhof, & Bohlmeijer, 2016). This concept of PWB was developed in the field of positive psychology and is associated with happiness and PWB. According to Ryff & Singer, PWB consists of six dimensions: Autonomy: the ability to control one's life and act according to personal values and goals. Environmental Mastery: the ability to use the surrounding environment and plan effective actions to achieve goals. Personal Growth: the process of personal development, growth, and progress through life. Positive Relations with Others: positive and quality social relationships with others. Purpose in Life: having a purpose and meaning in life. Self-acceptance: accepting and feeling comfortable with oneself, including weaknesses and flaws (Ryff & Singer, 2008). PWB can improve a person's quality of life and reduce the risk of mental and physical disorders (Espie et al., 2019; Hernandez et al., 2017). However, if someone is experiencing problems with their psychological well-being, it is important to seek professional help.

Some students are still facing the problem of PWB. According to a research, financial pressure can lead to a higher probability of quitting college. Furthermore, if a student reports having debt from student loans, it can also increase the chances of them dropping out of college (Britt, Ammerman, Barrett, & Jones, 2017). Students are also sometimes susceptible to stress, particularly during special times like COVID-19 (Che Rahimi, Bakar, & Mohd Yasin, 2021; Keyserlingk, Pedroza, Arum, & Eccles, 2021; Sujadi, 2021; Sujadi et al., 2020). Another study explains that students can experience anxiety about academic performance, future career, interpersonal relationships, and financial issues (Yang, Asbury, & Griffiths, 2019). A study of 989 students found that 22% of students experience insomnia, with 10% experiencing behaviorally induced insufficient sleep syndrome (BIISS) (Yang et al., 2019). Further analysis also found a correlation between sleep disturbances and depression experienced by them (Yang et al., 2019). Furthermore, Schlarb et al. conducted a survey that found that as many as 60% of all students experience inadequate sleep quality, and 7.7% meet all the criteria for insomnia disorder (Schlarb, Friedrich, & Claßen, 2017). The issue of PWB is also increasing among final year students (Afryan, Saputra, Lisiswanti, & Ayu, 2019; Aulia & Panjaitan, 2019).

Several factors have been identified as influencing PWB, one of which is coping (Freire, Ferradás, Valle, Núñez, & Vallejo, 2016; Li & Hasson, 2020; Mayordomo, Viguer, Sales, Satorres, & Meléndez, 2016). Coping is a concept used in psychology to refer to the ways in which individuals deal with or handle stress and challenges in their lives. This concept encompasses various strategies and techniques for problem-solving, reducing stress, and enhancing PWB (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). One type of coping that is sometimes used by individuals, especially those who are religious, is religious coping. Religious coping is a concept in psychology that refers to individuals' efforts to cope with stress or life challenges by using their beliefs, values, and religious practices. This concept encompasses various strategies and techniques involving

religious beliefs and practices, such as prayer, meditation, reading sacred texts, and participation in religious activities (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). Utilizing religious beliefs, values, and practices to cope with stress can provide individuals with a greater sense of control, hope, and meaning in their lives. This can help individuals to deal with stress, enhance adaptation, and improve PWB (Mayordomo et al., 2016).

Other factors that affect PWB include optimism (Arslan, Yıldırım, Tanhan, Buluş, & Allen, 2021; FerhatKardas MustafaEskısu, SedatGelıbolu, 2019; Rand, Shanahan, Fischer, & Fortney, 2020). Optimism is a concept that refers to an individual's tendency to see the future with the belief that good things will happen and to expect positive outcomes from situations they face. Optimistic individuals tend to have a positive attitude, believe in themselves, and have high hopes. This concept is often associated with better PWB and physical health (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010). According to Seligman, optimism is key to achieving PWB and happiness in life (M. E. . Seligman, 1991). Individuals who are more optimistic tend to have better PWB, such as happiness, life satisfaction, and better mental health (M. E. Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Through this study, we aim to analyze: 1) the effect of religious coping on PWB; 2) the effect of optimism on PWB; and 3) the combined effect of religious coping and optimism on PWB. Although previous research has been conducted on this topic, it is still rare, especially in the context of education in Indonesia, particularly for senior students who are more vulnerable to psychological problems. The results of this study can be used by university leaders as a basis for developing intervention programs for students who may have PWB issues by maximizing counseling and guidance services and religious interventions.

Method

Design and Respondent

This study employed a survey design to examine the relationships among the study variables. Data were collected over a period of approximately one month in 2022. A total of 202 senior-level students from a university in Jambi Province participated in the study by completing the survey questionnaire. The survey was distributed online through the social media application WhatsApp. When respondents received the link, they were asked to respond to each statement provided. The following table presents the characteristics of the study participants.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	90	44.55
	Female	112	55.45
Year/Semester	2019/VII	117	57.92
	2018/IX	68	33.66
	2017/XI	17	8.41
Thesis progress	Thesis Proposal	57	28.22
	Research Results	145	71.78

Table 1 shows that 112 female students participated in the research scale (55.45%), while 90 male students participated (44.55%). Based on the characteristics of the academic year/semester, it was dominated by the 2019 academic year with 117 students (57.92%), followed by the 2018 academic year with 68 students (33.66%), and the 2017 academic year with 17 students (8.41%). Furthermore, based on the progress of thesis completion, 145 students or 71.78% were in the stage of preparing research results, compared to only 57 students or 28.22% who were still preparing research proposals.

Instruments

Psychological Wellbeing Scale

The Psychological Wellbeing Scale by Ryff, which consists of 18 items, is a measurement tool developed by Carol Ryff to measure individual PWB (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The scale includes 18 statements that cover six dimensions of PWB, namely self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The validity and reliability of the 18-item Psychological Wellbeing Scale by Ryff have been tested and proven to be good. The alpha coefficient of internal reliability of this scale reaches 0.89, indicating that the scale has a high level of consistency in measuring PWB (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

The Brief RCOPE

The Brief RCOPE is a scale used to measure individual religious coping styles in facing stressful situations (Pargament, Feuille, & Burdzy, 2011). The scale consists of 14 items divided into two dimensions of religious coping, namely positive religious coping and negative religious coping. The validity and reliability of The Brief RCOPE have been tested and proven to be good. The alpha coefficient of internal reliability of this scale reaches 0.84, indicating that the scale has a high level of consistency in measuring religious coping styles (Pargament et al., 2011). This scale has a low correlation with non-religious coping measures such as the Ways of Coping Questionnaire, indicating that the scale truly measures religious coping styles (Pargament et al., 2011).

Life Orientation Test - Revised (LOT-R)

The Life Orientation Test - Revised (LOT-R) is a psychological scale developed to measure an individual's optimism (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994). Consisting of 10 items, the scale evaluates the extent to which an individual holds positive beliefs about their future and various life situations. The LOT-R was retested by Scheier, Carver, & Bridges in 1994 and showed good internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.78) as well as good convergent and discriminant validity (Scheier et al., 1994). Furthermore, the scale has been tested in various contexts, including individuals with different mental and physical health conditions. Overall, the LOT-R can be considered a valid and reliable scale for measuring optimism in individuals in specific research contexts (Scheier et al., 1994).

Data Analysis

Multiple regression was used to analyze the data in this study. Multiple regression is a statistical analysis technique used to study the relationship between two or more independent variables and one dependent variable. In multiple regression, the dependent variable (y) is influenced by more than one independent variable (x1, x2, x3, etc.), resulting in a regression equation with several regression coefficients (b1, b2, b3, etc.) that measure the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). To test the significance of the regression coefficients in the multiple regression model, F or t tests can be performed. In addition, testing of multiple regression assumptions such as normality, homogeneity, and independence of residuals is also required (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014).

Results and Discussion

Before conducting multiple regression analysis, it is important to test the classical assumptions to ensure that the basic assumptions of regression are met. There are several classical assumptions in multiple regression analysis, including normality, linearity, and multicollinearity. If one or more of these assumptions are not met, data transformation or model modification may be necessary to meet these assumptions. If the assumptions are not met even after data transformation or model modification, the results of the regression analysis cannot be relied upon. Table 2 presents the results of the normality, linearity, and multicollinearity tests of the study variables.

Table 2. Classic Assumption Testing

Classical Assumption Test	Sig.	Decision
Normality Test	0,657	Normality
Linearity Test*		
The Effect of Religious coping on PWB	0.208	Linearity
The Effect of Optimism on PWB	0.372	Linearity
Multicollinearity	1.045**	No multicollinearity

*Deviation from linearity
** VIF Value

As all classic assumption tests have met the requirements, hypothesis testing was conducted next. There were three hypotheses tested in this study, namely: 1) the effect of religious coping on PWB; 2) the effect of optimism on PWB; and 3) the combined effect of religious coping and optimism on PWB. Table 3 presents the results of hypothesis testing.

Tabel 3. Hypothesis testing

Path	F	Sig.	Decision
The Effect of Religious coping on PWB	21.96	0.000	Hypothesis accepted
The Effect of Optimism on PWB	19.18	0.000	Hypothesis accepted
The Effect of Religious Coping and Optimism on PWB	18.58	0.000	Hypothesis accepted

The significance test aims to explain whether the variation in the independent variables can explain the variation in the dependent variable by using the F-value. Based on Table 3 above, it can be determined whether the variation in the independent variables (religious coping and optimism) can explain the dependent variable (PWB) by looking at the magnitude of the F-value. The F-value for the first hypothesis was 21.97 with a significance value of 0.000, the F-value for the second hypothesis was 19.18 with a significance value of 0.000, and the F-value for the third hypothesis was 18.58 with a significance value of 0.000. It can be concluded that all the hypotheses are accepted.

PWB is very important for an individual to live a happy, healthy, and satisfying life. In the specific population context, students need to have good PWB to support their academic success. PWB plays an important role in maintaining good mental health. Individuals with good PWB are less likely to experience mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and stress (Q. Liu, Shono, & Kitamura, 2009). Conversely, students with low PWB will have a negative impact on their mental health. Low PWB makes it difficult for individuals to cope with situations more effectively. Individuals with good PWB are less likely to cope with stress (Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2014).

In general, PWB is about having emotional balance, feeling good about oneself, developing positive relationships with others, having clear life goals, and feeling that their lives have meaning and purpose (Winefield, Gill, Taylor, & Pilkington, 2012). In students, PWB can be seen from the happy academic life condition, where they feel happy and satisfied with the academic process they undergo. Conversely, those who have low PWB can be seen from several characteristics, such as experiencing feelings of anxiety and depression, difficulty in controlling emotions (Guerra-Bustamante, León-del-Barco, Yuste-Tosina, López-Ramos, & Mendo-Lázaro, 2019), and negative views about oneself (Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014).

The research findings indicate that religious coping significantly effects PWB, which is consistent with several previous studies. The research conducted by Folkman and Moskowitz demonstrated that individuals who utilize adaptive coping mechanisms usually exhibit higher levels of PWB compared to those who use maladaptive coping strategies. Adaptive coping strategies include proactive approaches to problem-solving, while maladaptive coping strategies involve avoidance and denial (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Several other studies have indicated that individuals who are capable of utilizing adaptive coping mechanisms often exhibit higher levels of life satisfaction (Y. Kim & Seidlitz, 2002).

In cancer patients, studies have found a positive relationship between coping and PWB; communication and family support are positive coping sources (Kotkamp-Mothes, Slawinsky, Hindermann, & Strauss, 2005), as well as in firefighter respondents (Landen & Wang, 2010). In a study conducted on a group of nurses, several significant correlations were discovered between demographic characteristics, nursing stressors, coping mechanisms, and PWB. The use of denial as a coping strategy and experiencing workplace stress related to death and dying were identified as negative predictors of PWB (Qiao, Li, & Hu, 2011). Among a group of infertile women, the utilization of problem-focused coping strategies was linked to high levels of PWB, whereas avoidance and seeking social support mechanisms were associated with low levels of PWB (Hynes,

Callan, Terry, & Gallois, 1992). The relationship between these two variables is also effective in the student population (Freire et al., 2016; Gustems-Carnicer & Calderón, 2013). Specifically, several studies have also shown a relationship between religious coping and PWB (P. Y. Kim, Kendall, & Webb, 2015; Krok, 2015; Sujadi, 2022; Sujadi, Meditamar, & Ahmad, 2022).

Furthermore, this study also tested the hypothesis that optimism has an effect on PWB, with significant results. Optimism has been shown to have a positive influence on a person's PWB. Several studies have indicated that individuals with higher levels of optimism typically exhibit greater happiness, lower stress levels, and better mental health. Moreover, resilience has been found to be a significant predictor of PWB, and optimism is seen to play a modest mediating role in the relationship between resilience and PWB. These findings suggest that personal traits, such as optimism, can impact PWB (Hosein Souri & Hasanirad, 2011). In a study conducted on a group of parents with children who have cancer, optimism was found to have a significant correlation with life satisfaction, subjective health perception, anxiety, and depression (Fotiadou, Barlow, Powell, & Langton, 2008). Furthermore, research suggests that personality traits, such as resilience, can impact PWB. However, irrespective of the level of resilience, having a relatively optimistic outlook can enhance feelings of well-being (Hossein Souri, 2013).

One study that examined the relationship between optimism and PWB was conducted by Carver et al. The study found that high levels of optimism are positively correlated with better mental health in individuals who experience stress due to chronic illness. Another study also found the same relationship between optimism and PWB in the general population (Carver et al., 2010). Furthermore, another study revealed that both coping and optimism have a significant impact on PWB (Bedi & Brown, 2005). In addition, research conducted by Fredrickson found that individuals who are more optimistic tend to have higher levels of positivity, thus promoting better mental health (Fredrickson, 2001). Furthermore, optimism is also associated with an individual's ability to cope with negative events and view them as challenges that can be overcome (M. E. . Seligman, 1991).

There are several limitations to this study. First, the measurement was only conducted cross-sectionally, so future research could conduct longitudinal studies. Second, statistical analysis is still very limited in regression testing; for future research, more complex analyses can be used, such as structural equation modeling by making optimism a mediating variable. Third, the measurement of PWB was done through a survey, so the results may be biased.

Conclusion

PWB problems in students can be dangerous as they can disrupt their mental, academic, and social health. Students often experience academic, social, and financial pressures that can cause feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress. The findings of this study prove that religious coping and optimism significantly affect PWB. This indicates the ability of students to cope with stress stemming from religion and positive beliefs and views about the future, leading to their healthy PWB.

These findings have implications for the handling of PWB problems on campus. There is a need for effective prevention and treatment programs aimed at all students, especially those who are vulnerable to mental health disorders. The demands given to students should be adjusted to their resilience. In addition, intervention programs can be provided through a well-programmed counseling service provided by professional counselors.

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