



Subjective Well-being of Students in Vocational High Schools: Portraits from the Sundanese and Javanese Ethnic Groups

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of subjective well-being among vocational high school students has garnered considerable attention, particularly in light of the high levels of anxiety many students face due to academic and social pressures. This study aims to delineate the profile of subjective well-being among students at SMK Provita Bandung and to identify differences in subjective well-being based on demographic characteristics. Employing a comparative study method, the research involved a sample of 157 students selected through stratified random sampling. Data on subjective well-being were collected using an inventory developed by the researcher, grounded in Ed Diener's theory, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques (ANOVA). The findings reveal that students' subjective well-being levels are categorized as moderate across the dimensions of pleasant experiences, unpleasant experiences, and life satisfaction. No significant differences were observed in subjective well-being concerning grade level, gender, age, or ethnicity. However, noteworthy differences were found based on characteristics of social contact. These results underscore the necessity for programs to enhance students' social interactions and cultivate an environment conducive to fostering connections, ultimately improving their subjective well-being.

Keywords: Subjective Well-Being; Demographic Characteristics; Vocational High School Students

ABSTRAK

Fenomena *subjective well-being* di kalangan siswa SMK menjadi perhatian penting, terutama mengingat banyaknya siswa yang mengalami tingkat kecemasan yang tinggi akibat

tekanan akademik dan sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan profil *subjective well-being* siswa di SMK Provita Bandung dan mengidentifikasi perbedaan karakteristik demografi terhadap *subjective well-being* tersebut. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah studi komparatif dengan sampel 157 siswa yang diambil secara *stratified random sampling*. Data *subjective well-being* dikumpulkan menggunakan inventori *subjective well-being* yang dikembangkan peneliti dari teori Ed Diener, dan dianalisis menggunakan teknik statistik deskriptif dan inferensial (ANOVA). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tingkat *subjective well-being* siswa berada pada kategori sedang untuk komponen pengalaman menyenangkan, pengalaman tidak menyenangkan, dan kepuasan hidup. Tidak terdapat perbedaan signifikan dalam *subjective well-being* berdasarkan tingkat kelas, gender, usia, dan suku. Namun, terdapat perbedaan signifikan dalam *subjective well-being* berdasarkan karakteristik kontak sosial. Implikasi penelitian ini perlunya program yang dapat memperkuat interaksi sosial di antara siswa dan adanya lingkungan yang mendukung keterhubungan antar siswa, sehingga *subjective well-being* mereka dapat meningkat.

Kata kunci: *Subjective Well-Being*; Karakteristik Demografi; Siswa Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey conducted in 2022 revealed that one in three teenagers (34.9%), amounting to 15.5 million adolescents in Indonesia, experienced at least one mental health issue over the past 12 years. Alarmingly, only 2.6% of these teenagers sought support or counseling services related to their emotions and behaviors in the last year. In response to this situation, positive psychology emerges as a valuable approach to enhancing students' mental well-being and overall quality of life. It serves as a foundational element that supports student development. Integrating positive psychology principles into contemporary educational settings is crucial in nurturing potential and improving student well-being (Alam, 2022; Heintzelman et al., 2023). Thus, an educational approach centered on positive psychology offers students opportunities for academic growth in areas such as emotional development, daily living, and social skills. Notably, subjective well-being is a crucial indicator of individual happiness and life satisfaction, playing a vital role in students' dynamic learning and personal development

processes (Morosanova et al., 2021). The Indonesia-National Adolescent Mental Health Survey in 2022 revealed that one in three teenagers (34.9%), equivalent to 15.5 million teenagers in Indonesia, experienced at least one mental health problem in the last 12 years. Only 2.6% of teenagers who face mental health problems have used support or counseling services related to emotions and behavior in the last 12 months. In this context, positive psychology emerges as an approach that can improve students' mental well-being and quality of life—positive psychology is a foundation that supports student development. Integrating positive psychology principles in contemporary educational contexts is essential for growing potential and improving student well-being (Alam, 2022; Heintzelman et al., 2023). Therefore, an educational approach centered on positive psychology provides opportunities for students to develop themselves in the academic domain and other areas, such as emotional development, daily living skills, and social development. In particular, subjective well-being is the leading indicator of individual happiness and life satisfaction, and it plays a role in the dynamic process of students' learning and personal development (Morosanova et al., 2021).

Empirical research indicates a positive correlation between high levels of subjective well-being and academic achievement, highlighting that favorable psychological conditions significantly influence students' learning capacities and academic performance (Bücker et al., 2018). This suggests that positive emotional states, integral to the subjective well-being framework, play a crucial role in students' academic success (Huebner et al., 2014). When students experience happiness, satisfaction, and reduced anxiety, they are likelier to demonstrate enhanced learning abilities and achieve superior academic results (Espeland et al., 2016; Zhoc et al., 2018). However, recent trends show increasing levels of anxiety and depression among high school students, revealing the complexities associated with achieving and maintaining subjective well-being (Osborn et al., 2020). Although subjective well-being is essential for students, data indicate that those within the school environment often encounter significant pressure and stress, which can impede their ability to attain optimal levels of well-being (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2021).

In Indonesia, the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress stands at 25.0%, 51.1%, and 38.9%, respectively, significantly affecting the quality of life (Astutik et al., 2020). Research conducted by Mariyati et al. (2023) on Islamic boarding school students in

Sidoarjo identified a noteworthy correlation between emotional regulation and subjective well-being. Their findings suggest that better emotional regulation is associated with heightened levels of subjective well-being, and conversely, poorer emotional regulation correlates with lower well-being. Additionally, a study by Khairudin and Mukhlis (2019) highlighted the relationship between religiosity, social support, and adolescents' subjective well-being, indicating that enhanced religiosity and social support contribute to improved subjective well-being in this demographic. Furthermore, research by Nugraha (2023) underscores the vital roles of self-compassion and religiosity in enhancing an individual's subjective well-being. Improvements in these two areas can aid individuals in facing challenges, bolster emotional resilience, and promote adopting a healthier lifestyle.

The intricate development dynamics during adolescence present unique challenges for students striving to maintain their subjective well-being. This phase involves several developmental tasks, including forming self-identity, pursuing autonomy, and establishing healthy social relationships (Branje, 2022; Zhang & Qin, 2023). Successfully navigating these tasks requires adaptability to the physical, emotional, and social transformations as they transition into adulthood (Ciranka & van den Bos, 2021). Additionally, demographic factors, notably both objective and subjective socioeconomic status, affect subjective well-being, with the latter showing a more pronounced impact. Population and income inequality interplay further moderates this relationship (Tan et al., 2020). Consequently, variations in individual characteristics influence subjective well-being. Recognizing these diverse characteristics is crucial for developing targeted strategies to enhance subjective well-being that cater to different groups' needs and demographic contexts.

Previous research has highlighted the significance of social support in enhancing students' subjective well-being. Students who perceive support from their families, peers, and teachers often report higher levels of well-being (Li et al., 2021; Tomás et al., 2020). Additionally, several studies indicate that adolescents with clear life goals and a sense of meaning tend to experience higher levels of subjective well-being (Grob, 2020; Morosanova et al., 2021). While existing research sheds light on the factors influencing subjective well-being, more targeted studies remain needed to explore how demographic characteristics affect this construct. This research aims to identify differences in the demographic characteristics of vocational school students that impact their subjective well-being, thereby

facilitating the design of more effective and tailored interventions and support programs that address the specific needs of each group.

METHODS

This comparative study aims to analyze the differences in demographic characteristics that influence subjective well-being among students at Provita Bandung Vocational High School (SMK). The research approach involves collecting demographic data such as age, gender, grade level, ethnicity, and social contacts. The sample consisted of students from classes X and XI at Provita Bandung Vocational School. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure that each subgroup was appropriately represented based on grade level, gender, age, and ethnicity. Given the diverse demographic characteristics present within the population, this method is critical, as it enhances the representativeness and accuracy of estimates regarding population parameters (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A total of 157 students were included in the analysis, with 68 students from class X and 89 from class XI. Further breakdowns of the sample are based on gender (7 male; 150 female), age (under 17 years; over 17 years), and ethnicity (Sundanese; Javanese). The demographic details of the sample are presented in Table 1.

The research instrument utilized was a subjective well-being inventory developed by the prominent theory proposed by Diener (1984). Subjective well-being pertains to an individual's evaluation of the quality of life within the school environment and the affective experiences associated with positive and negative emotions in adolescents. This subjective well-being inventory employs a modified Likert scale response format, offering four alternative answers: 1) very unsuitable, 2) inappropriate, 3) appropriate, and 4) very suitable. The inventory comprises 59 statement items representing three components of subjective well-being: 1) life satisfaction, 2) pleasant affect, and 3) unpleasant affect. The validity and reliability of the instrument were assessed through scale accuracy analysis, revealing values that ranged from "none" to 1.67 and then to -.34. The modified Likert scale demonstrated accuracy for respondents. Item suitability was confirmed to meet specific criteria for Outfit Mean Square ($.5 < \text{MNSQ} < 1.5$) and Outfit Z-Standard ($-2.0 < \text{ZSTD} < +2.0$). The Point Measure Correlation showed a satisfactory range ($.4 < \text{Pt Measure Corr} < 0.85$), although one item did not meet all these criteria. The dimensionality of the instrument

is evidenced by the raw variance explained by the measure, which was 46.7%, indicating a good quality assessment. Furthermore, as per Rasch modeling, the individual and item reliabilities reached .92, exceeding the benchmark of .8, demonstrating excellent interaction between respondents and items.

This research's data analysis employs descriptive and inferential statistical techniques through the JASP statistical application. Initially, descriptive statistics outline the students' demographic profiles and subjective well-being levels. Subsequently, inferential analysis, specifically the ANOVA test, is conducted to examine differences in subjective well-being based on demographic characteristics. This analysis aims to determine whether significant differences exist in subjective well-being across various demographic groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research are derived from the analysis of subjective well-being inventories completed by 157 students across two grade levels. This study aims to profile the subjective well-being of students at Provita Bandung Vocational School and identify the demographic characteristics correlated with their subjective well-being. Below is a brief overview of the main findings from the research, starting with the results of the descriptive analysis for each component, which are presented in Table 2.

Table 1.

Sample Demographics

Aspect	Category	Frequently (N)
Gender	Male	7
	Female	150
Age	Over 17 years old	74
	Under 17 years old	83
Grade Level	XI	68
	X	89
Ethnicity	Sundanese	146
	Java	11

Table 2.

Subjective Well-being Profile of Provita Bandung Vocational School Students

	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Subjective Well-being	170.624	14.977	135.000	211.000
Pleasant Affect	70.624	6.386	54.000	87.000
Unpleasant Affect	42.299	4.405	32.000	58.000
Life Satisfaction	57.701	6.027	40.000	74.000

Note. Data is tested by descriptive analysis; N = 157

Table 3.
Differences in Students' Levels of Subjective Well-Being

Aspect	N	Mean	Mean Square	F	P
Grade Level					
X	68	70.794	41.028	.084	.772
XI	89	70.494			
Gender					
Female	150	70.507	46.478	1.141	.287
Male	7	73.143			
Age					
Under 17 years	74	70.662	.202	.005	.944
Above 17 years	83	70.590			
Ethnicity					
Sundanese	146	70.808	70.562	1.738	.189
Javanese	11	68.182			
Social Contact					
Extrovert	66	71.955	201.525	5.070	.026*
Introvert	91	69.659			

Note. Data is tested by ANOVA test; N = 157

The descriptive analysis results presented in Table 2 provide a comprehensive overview of the data characteristics for each component studied. The subjective well-being variables, which include the components of positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction, yield a mean value of 170.624 and a standard deviation of 14.997. This indicates that the students at SMK Provita Bandung have a reassuringly moderate level of subjective well-being.

Specifically, the first component, which encompasses positive affect — including joy, satisfaction, pride, affection, happiness, and ecstasy — reveals a mean value of 70.624 with a standard deviation of 6.386. The low standard deviation suggests that most data points are closely clustered around the mean, indicating a high level of consistency in students' perceptions of positive affect. Thus, it can be concluded that students at SMK Provita Bandung display a moderate level of positive affect.

The second component, negative affect, incorporates feelings such as guilt, shame, sadness, worry, anger, and envy. With a mean value of 42.299 and a standard deviation of 4.405, the data also tends to cluster around the mean. This high level of consistency in the assessment of negative affect leads to the conclusion that students also experience a moderate level of negative influence.

The third component pertains to life satisfaction, which encompasses the desire for change, contentment with current circumstances, reflections on the past, outlook on the future, and other significant perspectives on life. The results show a mean value of 57.701 and a standard deviation of 6.027, indicating a slightly higher level of variation. This diversity in the assessment of students' life satisfaction is intriguing and suggests that students at SMK Provita Bandung possess a moderate level of life satisfaction.

The analysis in Table 3 indicates that the demographic characteristics related to class levels show no significant differences in subjective well-being between students in classes X and XI, as evidenced by an M-Square value of 41.028. The F value was not significant (.084; $P > .05$). Similarly, gender characteristics revealed an M-Square value of 46.478 and an F value that was not significant (1.141; $P > .05$), indicating no difference in subjective well-being between female and male students. Moreover, the age characteristics of the students also showed no significant difference, with an M-Square value of .202 and an F value that was not significant (.005; $P > .05$). This suggests no difference in subjective well-being between students under 17 years and those over 17 years of age. In terms of ethnic characteristics, the mean square value was 70.562, and the F value was insignificant (1.738; $P > .05$), indicating no differences in subjective well-being between students from the Sundanese and Javanese ethnic groups. However, a significant difference in subjective well-being was found concerning social contact characteristics, as indicated by a mean square value of 201.525 and a significant F value (5.070; $P < .05$). This result highlights differences in subjective well-being between extroverted and introverted students at Provita Bandung Vocational School.

The research findings indicate that the subjective well-being of students at Vocational School Provita Bandung falls within the medium category, reflecting the overall welfare condition of the students at the institution. The pleasant affect component refers to the daily positive emotional experiences that students encounter, encompassing feelings of happiness, joy, gratitude, and optimism during social interactions and routine activities. Consequently, students with moderate subjective well-being are more likely to experience a stable sense of happiness in their daily interactions and activities (Hudson et al., 2020; Jebb et al., 2020). This aligns with the study conducted by Kobylińska et al. (2020), which

demonstrates that students with moderate levels of subjective well-being tend to possess more excellent emotional stability in their everyday lives.

On the other hand, unpleasant affect refers to negative emotional experiences that students may encounter, such as stress, anxiety, sadness, and other adverse feelings. Factors such as academic pressure, interpersonal conflicts, and unsupportive environments can influence the intensity of these adverse effects. While students may face occasional emotional challenges, they often manage these difficulties effectively enough not to impact their overall well-being significantly (Llamas-Díaz et al., 2022). Research conducted by Amjad and Dasti (2022) corroborates these findings, indicating that students with practical stress management skills can maintain their levels of subjective well-being even when confronted with emotional stress. *Life satisfaction* is a student's overall quality of life assessment, encompassing their happiness and fulfillment across various aspects, including social relationships, academic success, involvement in extracurricular activities, and interactions with family and teachers. According to the research by Feraco et al. (2023), students' life satisfaction is closely linked to the quality of their social relationships and academic accomplishments.

This text underscores the importance of understanding various components of subjective well-being, as they significantly influence students' experiences within the school environment and their daily lives. When students experience joy, excitement, or happiness, they often exhibit higher motivation and greater satisfaction with their achievements. Positive emotions also foster more constructive social interactions with peers and teachers (Tomás et al., 2020). A sense of pride can enhance students' self-confidence, motivating them to achieve even more extraordinary accomplishments (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). Moreover, strong social relationships and feelings of affection are crucial for students' overall well-being (Yildiz & Eldeleklioğlu, 2024). When students feel connected to others and enjoy solid social support, they are likelier to feel safe, comfortable, and happy within the school setting (Calp, 2020). Conversely, guilt and shame are emotions that students commonly face upon recognizing that they have engaged in actions deemed wrong or harmful to others. These feelings can negatively impact students' subjective well-being, leading to stress and disrupting their social relationships with peers (Chong, 2020).

Moreover, feelings of anxiety and anger can significantly hinder students' focus and concentration during the learning process (Lee et al., 2021). Envy, a negative emotion, arises when students experience dissatisfaction or unhappiness concerning another person's success, achievements, or good fortune (de Ven & Zeelenberg, 2020). Nonetheless, students also exhibit a balanced desire to improve their lives and display a commendable level of satisfaction with their current, past, and future circumstances. They approach their goals and aspirations with optimism and positive expectations (Milona, 2020). Significant individuals' opinions play a crucial role in shaping their decisions and actions, underscoring the importance of social support for their overall well-being (Wilson et al., 2020). Ultimately, this interplay of positive and negative emotional experiences paints a comprehensive picture of students' subjective well-being.

Other findings from this research indicate no significant differences in students' subjective well-being based on class level, gender, age, or ethnicity. This aligns with previous studies suggesting that these demographic factors do not significantly influence subjective well-being; somewhat, it is shaped more by daily experiences, social relationships, and the psychosocial environment of the students (Savahl et al., 2020). Various studies indicate that social support, positive peer relationships, and perceptions of the school environment play a more critical role in determining subjective well-being than demographic factors like age and gender (Das et al., 2020; Luo et al., 2020; Tomás et al., 2020). Research by Chou (2021) finds no significant relationship between gender and subjective well-being, as male and female teenagers generally experience similar well-being conditions in positive environments. Similarly, Amalianita and Nirawana (2021) reported no significant differences in subjective well-being between male and female adolescents. Additionally, age does not significantly impact subjective well-being, whether students are under or over 17. During adolescence, the search for self-identity and the need for social acceptance seems to fundamentally influence the subjective well-being of teenagers (Jeyarani, 2022).

The ethnic differences between Javanese and Sundanese populations do not significantly impact subjective well-being. This can be attributed to the homogeneity of the social and cultural environment within schools, which tends to minimize broader cultural distinctions. Additionally, shared values and more prevalent experiences contribute to this

phenomenon. Supporting previous research, it has been observed that ethnic and cultural identity plays a significant role in contexts where interactions among different ethnic groups occur harmoniously and equitably. As a result, factors such as daily social interactions and perceptions of the school environment become more influential in shaping students' subjective well-being (Grob, 2020; Priwati et al., 2021).

The research findings reveal significant differences in subjective well-being between extroverted and introverted students. Extroverted students generally report higher subjective well-being than their introverted counterparts, as extroversion is often linked to more positive experiences and splendid happiness (Kwon & Choi, 2022). The results indicate that extroverted individuals are more inclined to participate in enjoyable social activities and maintain extensive social networks, contributing to their overall well-being. Furthermore, extroverted individuals tend to express positive emotions more effectively and receive excellent social support (Kroencke et al., 2023). Conversely, introverted students often experience anxiety in social situations. They are less likely to seek social interactions, which can limit their opportunities for positive social support and enhance their emotional experiences (Paradilla et al., 2021). Multiple studies suggest that introverted individuals may reflect more frequently and process information internally (Purnomo et al., 2023), potentially leading to increased feelings of stress or anxiety, thereby diminishing their subjective well-being.

Consequently, this study not only supports previous findings regarding the challenges faced by introverted students but also provides insight into various dimensions of their experiences. However, the limitations stemming from a sample size of only 157 students from a single school impede the generalization of these findings to a broader population, particularly concerning the characteristics of schools in different regions. This research suggests that future studies should concentrate on developing support strategies to enhance introverted students' subjective well-being.

CONCLUSION

Students' subjective well-being at Vocational School Provita Bandung is categorized as medium, as indicated by the components of pleasant affect, unpleasant affect, and life satisfaction, all of which reflect the students' emotional well-being. While no significant

differences in subjective well-being were observed based on demographic factors such as grade level, gender, age, or ethnicity, a notable distinction was found between extroverted and introverted students, with extroverted individuals exhibiting higher levels of subjective well-being. These findings underscore the importance of social relationships and emotional support in influencing student well-being. They suggest developing targeted support programs for introverted students to enhance their subjective well-being. Theoretical implications play a vital role in advancing our understanding of the various factors that impact subjective well-being among students. This research also opens avenues for further investigation into the relationships between personality, social support, and well-being, potentially leading to more effective strategies for fostering student well-being across diverse educational settings.

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