
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LONELINESS IN INDONESIAN AND MALAYSIAN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

7.8% of teenagers in ASEAN including Indonesia and Malaysia reported mostly or always feeling lonely and 31.3% reported feeling lonely sometimes in the last 12 months. This is closely related to the similarities in demographic background and social and cultural background of these countries. This research aims to determine the comparative level of loneliness among students in Indonesia and Malaysia. Loneliness Statistics data states that 43% of young adults aged 17-25 years feel lonely. Initial research interviews showed that students experienced loneliness and felt several things such as not feeling close to people around them, often being abandoned and ostracized, fear of rejection, and so on. A total of 235 Indonesian and Malaysian students living in dormitories were involved in this research. The measurement instrument uses the loneliness scale. The collection technique uses purposive sampling. The research results show that there is no difference in loneliness between Indonesian and Malaysian students. Variable analysis found that the biggest factor causing loneliness in Indonesian students came from within themselves and in Malaysian students the biggest factor causing loneliness came from outside themselves.

Keywords: *Loneliness, students, Indonesia, Malaysia, Dormitory*

STUDI KOMPARASI LONELINESS PADA MAHASISWA INDONESIA DAN MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

7,8% remaja di ASEAN termasuk Indonesia dan Malaysia melaporkan sebagian besar kadang atau selalu merasa kesepian dan 31,3% melaporkan terkadang merasa kesepian dalam 12 bulan terakhir. Hal berhubungan erat dengan kesamaan latar belakang demografis dan latar belakang sosial serta budaya yang dimiliki negara-negara tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui komparatif tingkat kesepian pada mahasiswa di Indonesia dan Malaysia. Data Loneliness Statistics menyatakan bahwa 43% dari dewasa awal yang berusia 17-25 tahun merasakan kesepian. Wawancara awal penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa mengalami kesepian dan merasakan beberapa hal seperti tidak merasa dekat dengan orang sekeliling, sering ditinggalkan dan diasingkan, ketakutan mendapat penolakan, dan lain-lain. Sebanyak 235 mahasiswa Indonesia dan Malaysia yang tinggal di asrama dilibatkan dalam penelitian ini. Instrumen pengukuran menggunakan skala loneliness. Teknik pengambilan menggunakan purposive sampling. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tidak terdapat perbedaan loneliness pada mahasiswa Indonesia dan Malaysia. Analisis variabel menemukan bahwa faktor terbesar penyebab loneliness pada mahasiswa Indonesia berasal dari dalam diri dan pada mahasiswa Malaysia faktor terbesar penyebab loneliness berasal dari luar diri.

Kata Kunci: *Kesepian, Mahasiswa, Indonesia, Malaysia, Asrama*

Introduction

Mental health problems are an important issue in society. WHO reported that before the pandemic, around one billion people, or one in 8 people worldwide lived with mental health problems in 2019. Based on the Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS), as many as one in three teenagers aged 10-17 years in Indonesia has had mental health problems in the last 12 months. That number is equivalent to 15.5 million teenagers in the country. Loneliness is recognized as an important factor in mental health (Klein, E.M., Zenger, M., Tibubos A.N., 2021). As social creatures, humans have a basic need for a sense of belonging to other social groups (Baumeister and Leary, 1995 in Klein, 2021). One of the impacts of not fulfilling basic human needs is the emergence of a feeling of loneliness.

Apart from that, loneliness is a public health problem that often arises, this is supported by Loneliness Statistics (Hartman, 2022) which states that 43% of young adults aged 17-25 years feel lonely. Loneliness is an unpleasant feeling characterized by negative emotions that a person has as well as a mismatch between the expected social relationships and the availability of the relationships they have, which then gives rise to feelings of loneliness, making the individual feel that no one can understand him well (Utami, Anindya A., 2022). According to Gottlieb (Batara et al, 2020) Loneliness is caused by several factors, including situations, namely separation from family, and old friends which create a need for other people; beliefs, namely harmful thoughts such as oneself being useless and undesirable to others; personality, namely the relationship between loneliness and several personal characteristics such as shame, low self-esteem, and the belief that the world is not a happy place.

Indonesia and Malaysia are the same region on the ASEAN continent. Moreover, several regions of Indonesia border directly with Malaysia, one of which is West Kalimantan Province, which results in close cultural ties between Malaysia and West Kalimantan province. Previous research on loneliness among college students has investigated its relationship to culture (Bauer, 2004). Adjustment and transition to a new environment are shared by Malaysian and Indonesian students currently studying at universities who live in dormitories. The transition from a high school student to a college student is a stressful and very challenging time (Corley, 2013). Although college students share similarities with individuals in the general population, MacKean found that they are at greater risk for negative mental health outcomes because they are exposed to two sources of transition stress: stress associated with the transition from high school to college and stress associated with the transition from adolescence to

adulthood (MacKean 2011). Failure to establish environmental interactions and lack of social support can result in feelings of loneliness which can disrupt mental health. Research on Loneliness and Health Risk Behaviors Among ASEAN Adolescents conducted by Karl Peltzer and Supa Pengpid found that 7.8% of adolescents in ASEAN including Indonesia and Malaysia reported mostly sometimes or always feeling lonely and 31.3% reported sometimes feeling lonely in 12 months Lastly, this is also closely related to similarities in demographic background and social and cultural background. Based on the results of interviews with seven students from each country, Indonesia and Malaysia on 30 March - 8 April 2023 online, it was found that there was a phenomenon of loneliness among Indonesian and Malaysian students who lived in dormitories, indicating that the feeling of loneliness felt was due to several things, such as not feeling close to people around them, feeling often abandoned and isolated, having difficulty asking for help because they are afraid of rejection, feeling not part of a certain social group, feeling like they don't have friends they can rely on, and feeling ostracized by their surrounding environment which makes students often lonely and difficult to ask for help if they face difficulties, 57% of them even withdraw from the environment. The results of the study The Magnitude of Loneliness and Associated Risk Factors among University Students conducted by Hamideh Zahedi et al. showed that students who lived in dormitories experienced more severe loneliness than students who lived with their families. This can happen due to the separation of students from their families, unfamiliar environments, and confrontations with new people in the dormitory (Zaedi et al., 2022).

This research explores loneliness from the perspective of differences in cultural environment which is one of the predictors of mental health in Indonesian and Malaysian students who live in dormitories. The hypothesis in this research is that there is no difference in loneliness between Indonesian and Malaysian students who live in dormitories.

Methods

Research Design

This research uses quantitative methods with a survey approach. The data collection technique is in the form of a questionnaire. The use of a comparative study involving 235 students aims to compare the level of loneliness in Indonesian and Malaysian students who have similarities in diverse cultural backgrounds.

Research Participants

The sampling technique used in this research was nonprobability sampling, consisting of all students in Indonesia and Malaysia who lived in dormitories. The population size is not known with certainty, so in this study, the researcher determined the sample according to general guidelines for sampling according to Roscoe (1975) with a sample size of $n > 30$ and $n < 500$ which is quite appropriate for research in general (Roscoe 1975 in Azwar). So in this study, researchers used a sample of 235, namely 152 Indonesian students and 83 Malaysian students.

Data Collection Method

In this study, researchers used a loneliness scale based on aspects of loneliness from Bruno (2000), namely isolation, rejection, feeling misunderstood, feeling unloved, not having friends, being too lazy to open up, being bored, and anxiety.

The scale distributed through this questionnaire must be tested for validity and reliability. Validity concerns the accuracy of using variable indicators, and reliability relates to the consistency of these indicators. The requirements for measuring instruments are declared valid if professional judgment is used.

Validitas dan Reliabilitas

1. Instrument Validity Test

Validity testing is the most important consideration in evaluating the quality of tests as measuring instruments (Azwar, 2022). So the concept of validity refers to feasibility, meaningfulness, and usefulness.

1. Instrument Reliability Test

Reliability testing is a measurement that is capable of producing data that has consistency, dependability, trustworthiness, and stability of the instrument so that reliable results are obtained in the form of relatively similar results on several occasions when measurements are carried out on groups (Azwar, 2022). In this research, researchers conducted reliability tests on each variable so that the variable construct could be identified. In addition, researchers used the Cronbach alpha coefficient (α) which was calculated using the SPSS Statistics program. with a value greater than that which has been determined, namely, greater than 0.7.

Data analysis

Primary data in this research is data from scale distribution sourced from respondents who are Malaysian and Indonesian students who live in dormitories. The analysis of this research uses the normality test as an assumption test and a hypothesis test.

1. Normality test

The normality test is used to determine whether the data population is normally distributed or not. The normality test uses the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with SPSS Statistics. With the interpretation requirement that $\text{sig} > 0.05$ is interpreted as normally distributed data, so parametric statistical tests can be carried out.

2. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis testing is used to determine whether the regression coefficient is significant or not on the independent variable on the dependent variable. To conclude hypotheses and strengthen them in data analysis. Researchers can see the t-test results data sourced from the One Sample Test output in the SPSS software program. If the significance value is > 0.05 then H_0 is accepted, conversely, if the significance value is < 0.05 then H_0 is rejected (Ghozali, 2016).

Result

This research was carried out online by distributing a Google form to subjects, namely all students in Indonesia and Malaysia aged 17-24 years who were active students living in dormitories. Most of the Malaysian student subjects came from Universiti Putra Malaysia, while the distribution of Indonesian student subjects was quite wide and came from various universities in Indonesia.

Testing of Measuring Instruments

After the preparation of the measuring instrument was completed, the researcher carried out a trial of the scale that had been created. The loneliness scale used in this research was created by the researcher himself based on aspects of loneliness from Bruno (2000). The loneliness scale consists of 32 favorable statements and 32 unfavorable statements. The total scale used in this research is 64 items. Distribution of the tryout scale was carried out by sharing a link from Google Forms. This scale trial was carried out on 23 November 2023 and distributed to 42 Indonesian students. After the data is collected and tabulated, item analysis is then carried out to obtain an index of item discrimination power based on corrected item total

and reliability using Cronbach's alpha formula with the help of SPSS. An item can be said to be reliable if it meets Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.7. (Azwar, 2012).

Research Implementation

After testing the validity and reliability of the scale, the next stage is conducting research. This research was conducted from November 28 to December 4 2023 by distributing a Google form link in Indonesian and an English Google form link for Malaysian students. From this distribution, 98 data were obtained from Malaysian students and 157 data from Indonesian students. After obtaining data from each country, researchers carried out data processing using the SPSS Statistics program.

Analysis of Research Results

Variable Categorization

Description of Hypothetical and Empirical Data

Empirical scores are obtained through data results with the help of the SPSS program, while hypothetical scores are obtained by calculating minimum and maximum values. The maximum score comes from multiplying the number of items with the highest value, while the lowest score comes from multiplying the number of items with the lowest value. The results of the mean are obtained from the formula $\mu = \frac{\text{maximum score} + \text{minimum score}}{2}$. The standard deviation value is obtained using the formula $\alpha = \frac{\text{maximum score} - \text{minimum score}}{6}$. From this formula, results will be obtained for the mean, SD, max and min values (Azwar, 2012).

Table 1.
Description of Research Data

No.	Variable	N	Hypothetical Score				Empirical Score			
			Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1.	<i>Loneliness</i> (Indonesia)	58	58	232	145	29	77	209	135,44	19,18
2.	<i>Loneliness</i> (Malaysia)	58	58	232	145	29	101	159	132,30	13,29

From the results of the data description in the table above, variables are categorized into three levels, namely low, medium, and high. To obtain this categorization value, hypothetical data is calculated manually using the following categorization norms:

Table 2.
Categorization Norms

Norms	Categorization
$X \leq \text{Mean} - \text{SD}$	Low
$\text{Mean} - \text{SD} < X \leq \text{M} + \text{SD}$	Medium
$X > \text{M} + \text{SD}$	High

Based on categorization norms, the following categorization scores for Indonesian students are obtained:

Table 3.
Indonesian Loneliness Categorization

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rendah	24	15.8	15.8	15.8
	Sedang	123	80.9	80.9	96.7
	Tinggi	5	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

The table above shows that 15.8% of subjects are in the low category, 80.9% of subjects are in the medium category, and 3.3% of subjects are in the high category.

Based on categorization norms, the following categorization scores for Malaysian students are obtained:

Table 4.
Categorization of Malaysian Loneliness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rendah	9	10.8	10.8	10.8
	Sedang	74	89.2	89.2	100.0
	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

The table above shows that 10.8% of subjects are in the low category, 89.2% of subjects are in the medium category, and 0% of subjects are in the high category.

Test Assumptions

Normality test

The Normality Test aims to test whether in the regression model, the dependent and independent variables have a normal distribution or not. The normality test in this research uses the One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov Test so that the data can be said to be normally distributed if the Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) value in the test results table is more than 0.05.

Table 5.
One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov Test

		INDONESIA	MALAYSIA
N		152	83
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	135.44	132.30
	Std. Deviation	19.185	13.239
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.058	.093
	Positive	.058	.051
	Negative	-.048	-.093
Test Statistic		.058	.093
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200 ^{c,d}	.072 ^c

- a. Test distribution is Normal.
- b. Calculated from data.
- c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.
- d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Based on the table above, the significant values (p) in the One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test are 0.2 and 0.072 ($p > 0.05$), so based on the One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test it can be concluded that the data are normal.

Hypothesis testing

Table 6.
T-test

Group Statistics					
	NEGARA	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
LONELINESS	INDONESIA	152	135.44	19.185	1.556
	MALAYSIA	83	132.30	13.239	1.453

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
LONELINESS	Equal variances assumed	6.422	.012	1.328	233	.186	3.140	2.365	-1.520	7.799
	Equal variances not assumed			1.475	220.464	.142	3.140	2.129	-1.056	7.336

From the results of the t-test analysis, the value of $t = 1.328$ is obtained with a significance of $0.186 > 0.05$, which means that H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected, so there is no difference between loneliness in Indonesian and Malaysian students.

Discussion

This research was conducted to determine the comparison of loneliness among students living in dormitories. This research is cross-cultural research where researchers use subjects from two different countries, namely Indonesia and Malaysia. The subjects of this research were all Indonesian and Malaysian students who were active students aged 17-24 years and lived in dormitories with a total of 235 people (152 Indonesians, 83 Malaysians). Loneliness data in this research was obtained from a scale created by the researcher himself using aspects of loneliness from Bruno (2000).

The results of the research that has been conducted show that the majority of research subjects in Indonesia and Malaysia have moderate levels of loneliness with the difference in the percentage of lonely students in Malaysia being 8.3% higher with a percentage of 89.2% compared to Indonesian students who have a percentage of 70.9%, t-test analysis obtained a value of $t = 1.328$ with a significance of $0.186 > 0.05$, which proves that the hypothesis H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected, which means there is no difference in loneliness between Indonesian and Malaysian students.

The results of the analysis of the loneliness variable found that the main cause of loneliness in students in both countries is related to the social support they have. Judging from the main factor causing loneliness in Indonesian students is the lack of desire of students to open up, while the main cause of loneliness in Malaysian students is feelings of friendship. not very meaningful or lack of closeness in the circle of friends. This is supported by the study Loneliness at Universities: Determinants of Emotional and Social Loneliness among Students conducted by Katrina et al., which found that emotional loneliness was less common in participants who were in a committed relationship or those who were married compared to those who were not in a relationship.

Conclusion

The conclusion in the results of research that has been carried out regarding a comparative study of loneliness in students found differences in loneliness in Indonesian and Malaysian students who live in dormitories. The number of Indonesian students who experience loneliness at a moderate level is 8.3% lower than the number of Malaysian students who experience loneliness. The results of the analysis of the loneliness variable found that social support is one of the factors causing student loneliness in both countries, however for Indonesian students this factor arises from causes that originate from within themselves where Indonesian students are less open, while for Malaysian students this factor originates from external factors where Malaysian students feel there is a lack of closeness in their friendship environment. In the analysis of social support, it was found that there were low levels of reliable relationship factors for students in both countries.

Suggestion

Indonesian students can take advantage of various online and offline activities to learn to open themselves up to be able to build meaningful and reliable relationships, this can be done through online platforms or taking advantage of activities in the environment around the dormitory.

For Malaysian students to be able to strengthen their friendship relationships so that they can create a feeling of security and comfort through closeness in the friendship environment, this can be done by doing daily activities with friends such as spending free time together and trying to get to know each other better.

Future researchers who want to research the loneliness variable in Indonesian or Malaysian students can carry out further research by considering other variables related to mental health. Apart from that, it can also research factors that influence the level of loneliness in students with various factors and backgrounds.

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