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Nor Aini Mohamed, Jeffrey Lawrence D' Silva, Asnarulkhadi Abu Samah, Hayrol Azril Mohamed Shafril, Dzuhailmi Dahalan

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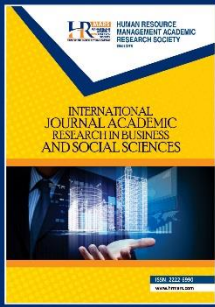
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Exploring Contributing Factors on Holistic Well-being among Malaysian Youth

Nor Aini Mohamed, Jeffrey Lawrence D' Silva, Asnarulkhadi Abu Samah, Hayrol Azril Mohamed Shafril, Dzuhailmi Dahalan
Institute for Social Science Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Abstract

The Global Youth Wellbeing index includes 35 indicators across seven domains that is gender equality, economic opportunity, education, health, safety and security, citizen participation and information and communication technology. Youth signifies the developmental phase where critical decisions are taken on the key life transitions including; continuing education, entering work, adopting healthy lifestyles, starting a family and participating in society. The purpose of this paper is to explore the factors that contribute to holistic wellbeing among Malaysian youth. The Nominal Group Technique was used to address the question 'What influence the well-being of youth? The group participants were nine youth ages 19 -29 years. Item generation was followed by discussion for clarification and operationalisation. The results indicated that self-recognition, love, quality time, entertainment, health, vacation, education, ICT, spirituality, wealth, peace, interpersonal relationship and infrastructure, influence the well-being of youth. This study highlighted some important findings that could be used as guidelines in conducting further research on the well-being of youth in Malaysia. Interventions implemented on improving youth well-being should cover on individual, family, learning institutions as well as community level.

Keywords: Holistic Well-Being, Youth Family Relationships, Life Satisfaction

Introduction

The Global Youth Wellbeing index includes 35 indicators across seven domains that is gender equality, economic opportunity, education, health, safety and security, citizen participation and information and communication technology. According to the 2017 Global Youth Wellbeing Index, youth wellbeing in all Index countries improved by an average of 2 percent (Sharma, 2017). Young people grow to adulthood within a complex web of family, peer, community, societal, and cultural influences that affect present and future health and wellbeing (Viner et al, 2012). For Malaysia's journey, inclusive growth could potentially lie in the hands of the country's youth. 'Transformasi Nasional 2050' or TN50 is an initiative to plan for the future of Malaysia in the period 2020 to 2050. TN50 recognizes citizen well-being as one of its core pillars. Hence, measuring the current well-being of Malaysian youth is pertinent to provide precise input for the

formulation of TN50. Youth represents the developmental phase where critical decisions are taken on the key life transitions including; continuing education, entering work, adopting healthy lifestyles, starting a family and participating in society. These decisions have long-term impacts not only for young people but also for their families, communities, and economy. Thus, youth needs to have a well-being life for them to make right decisions in their life.

Identifying the domains that constitute the measurement of well-being has frequently caused much debate among social scientists. Previously much focus had been given to utilize Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the single indicator to measure well-being of society. As times passes by, many researchers had argued on the usage of GDP as the sole criteria and it has further expanded into adding additional variables such as education, life expectancy, pollution, etc. to measure well-being. The measurement of well-being has since been further stretched with the inclusion of subjective indicators and three approaches are used, namely, the evaluative approach, affect approach and eudemonic approach, to measure well-being.

Despite the progress made in the measurement of well-being, much research is needed to measure well-being particularly among the youth. Indicators of well-being could differ according to the different target groups such as people with disabled, indigenous community, youth, etc. A thorough search on the existing literature shows that very little empirical research is found to measure the holistic well-being of youth. This aim of this study is to unveil the potential indicators that could be used to measure the youths' holistic well-being.

Literature Review

Previous scholars have divided the well-being dimensions into two, objective and subjective dimensions. Ivkovic, Ham, and Mojic (2014) defined objective well being as an economic development (e.g living conditions) and subjective well being as a perception of the residents about the quality of life. The objective aspect of well-being includes material well-being, health, longevity, literacy, and education.

In terms of subjective well-being, Malaysia Economic Planning Unit (2013) focus on aspects of communication, education, income and distribution, transport, employment, culture, environment, family, governance, health, leisure, public safety and social engagement. Furthermore, a study by Alartseva and Barysheva (2015); Darwish (2016) listed communication, economic satisfaction, employee well-being, environmental well-being, education, general physical, political well-being, public safety, social well-being and spiritual well-being in subjective well-being.

Ramli et al (2017) also mentioned that subjective well-being is not just covering the tangible aspects such as physical infrastructure and the economy, but also the non-tangible aspects such as emotional, social, political, spiritual, psychological, happiness and others. In terms of health, youth population is known to experience high levels of depression. They encounter transitions that can place them at risk.

Life satisfaction is fundamentally important for well-being in youth. Further, we have shown the diverse range of variables that can and do impact on life satisfaction in youth, including, for example, supportive interpersonal relationships with family, friends, and school colleagues, participation in meaningful instrumental activities, leading a healthy lifestyle that avoids substance misuse, excess alcohol, and tobacco, and demonstrating positive behavior that reinforces positive, prosocial interactions with peers (Proctor and Linley, 2014).

For youth, family members play a significant role in contributing to their well-being. Perceived support from family significantly predicted each aspect of well-being (Brannan et al, 2013). Furthermore, family connectedness is also a main factor for youth well-being (Woodman & McArthur, 2017). Thus, parents or care givers need to have an empathetic and warm bond with their children. There must be a constant level of control and care, which would help the child to have a better psychological well – being (Indumathy, & Ashwini, 2017).

Besides family, friends also play important role in youth's life. Friendship is the main tool and a social support source for youth development by providing approval, understanding, insight and social skills (Hiatt, Laursen, Mooney & Rubin, 2015). Recent studies by Bakalim and Taşdelen-Karçkay (2016) found that the friendship quality is positively associated with psychological well-being in youth.

Materialism represents the importance of possessions in one's life. However, materialism is addressed as a negative value that tends to have a harmful impact on the subjective well-being and life satisfaction of youth (Froh, Emmons, Card, Bono, & Wilson, 2011). Youth who believed that money, possessions, image, and popularity are of large importance also reported lessened self-actualization, vitality and happiness, and more anxiety physical symptoms, and unhappiness. (Kasser and Ahuvia, 2002). Money is a fundamental aspect of human life throughout the world. People spend a large fraction of their time earning and spending money, and use market goods during all of their waking and sleeping moments. Modern youth are "the most brand-oriented, consumer-involved, and materialistic generation in history."

Internet usage benefits youths in terms of connecting them to society, which may increase their well-being. The Internet supports them to express themselves as well as increase their self-esteem by having self-disclosure with the person they communicate with, through instant messaging, email, Twitter, and also through a person's Facebook (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009).

There is growing evidence in the theoretical literature regarding the importance of religion and religiosity in people's lives, particularly concerning their health and well-being. Dill (2017) in a study in one Western country indicate that youth have many-sided dimensions of their spirituality, including the role of prayer in their lives, an unwavering faith in a higher power, and the importance of giving back to their communities. A study by Choong, Ong, and Moschis (2013) finds that religiosity has an effect on the well-being.

Methodology

Research Design

This study was carried out using a qualitative method as the approach was deemed most appropriate to obtain domains that will explain contributing factors on holistic well-being among Malaysian youth. A work flow as in Figure 1 using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) was implemented as the method for data collection. Idea generation and problem-solving are combined in a structured group process, which encourages and enhances the participation of group members (Gallagher,1993).

According to Harvey & Holmes (2012), Nominal Group Technique have need of direct participant involvement, in a way that is non-hierarchical, and where all participants have the same voice

and the responses to the posed question have equal validity. The generation of the responses to the posed question takes place in silence, with no discussing with other participants, nor seeking elucidation or clarification from the researcher. This silent approach to ideas generation enables participants to develop their own thoughts and ideas, without interference or pressure from others, lessening group dynamics that may be unhelpful or undermining to the overall process (McMurray 1994).

A total of 9 participants, youth ages from 19 – 29 years old were invited for the NGT session, conducted by a moderator (researcher) and assisted with three research members. The NGT sessions started with the justification on the purpose of the research by project leaders and followed by the introduction of team members as well as the participants. In this study, the NGT session lasted for 2 hours and involved 4 step as below:

Step 1: Present key question on the flip chart and read loudly to the participants for feedback.

What factors influences your well-being in life?

Step 2: Silent phase

Participants will be issued the pink sticky notes to each participant. Without discussing with other participants, based on the knowledge and experience of participants, they write down all factors that they think influence the well-being of their life (one factor per one pink sticky note).

Step 3: Round-robin phase

In turn, participants stick one pink sticky on the flip chart without comment or discussion until all ideas or pink sticky notes are exhausted or run out. No comment and discussion in this phase because of preventing some participants from advocating for their position and influencing other members of the group. If one idea (factor) of the participant on the stick note is the same or similar to another's, then facilitator comments and sticks or groups these together.

Step 4: Discussion/item clarification to make themes

All members of the group clarify and discuss the unclear factors or items until everything is understandable. All these items are grouped, edited and named into themes, without discarding any item.

Results

From the NGT session, 14 domains emerged. The first domain is recognition. Youth perceived recognition in terms of rank, position in society, be a leader, to be a pioneer, to be role model and success contribute positively to their level of well-being. Youth have high expectations for their future goals and resources, which are linked to high competition and the need for status and recognition.

The next domain is love and affection. Youth mentioned that they need love from spouse, parents, family members and friends. The positive feelings such as calmness and comforts with spouse, parents, family members and friend will increase their well-being. They need to have a

happy family and need to be respected. Happiness is part of subjective well-being. The bonding that exists is a quality time is also important in contributing positively to their level of well-being. The third domain is entertainment. For youth, for them to improve the level of well-being, they need to involve in games, fun activities and go vacation. Another domain that is also crucial in contributing to the well-being is health. Youth perceived that practicing a healthy lifestyle, including living in no stress contribute positively to their level of well-being. Hygiene is also important to them. In terms of politics, youth perceived they need to be included, have the right to voice their opinion and is given right to make decisions. Besides, they also need to have influence in the community they live in.

In this globalization world, youth perceived the education level is contributing positively to their level of well-being. Thus, the scholarship offered by the government and private agencies is really important in helping them achieve the highest educational level as the tuition fees are increasing. Along the way, internet and ICT tools are also important to them. Nowadays, having an updated smartphone with a mobile application is not a desire anymore, but it is needed. Mobile applications will fulfill all the lifestyle and makes life easier, as well as save time and energy.

Another important domain emerged from the NGT is spirituality. Youth perceived spirituality as have a good heart, responsible, free from corruption's, be a good child to parents and always be grateful for what they have in life.

It can be denied that money and wealth is important in life everybody's life. Economic is objective dimensions of well-being. Youth perceived money and wealth in terms of having a lot of savings, have extra income, free from debt, own business and live in luxury will improve their well-being. Lastly, youth perceived peacefulness is also contributing positively to their well-being. Besides, they mentioned that the environment cleanliness is also the factors that contribute to their well-being.

Domains that contributes to holistic wellbeing among youth

1. Recognition

- Rank
- Position in society
- Leader
- Role model
- Success

2. Love

- Parents
- Spouse
- Happy family
- Respected
- Happiness

3. Self-time / Quality time

- Games
- Fun
- Vacation

4. Entertainment and leisure activities
5. Health
 - Physically fit
 - Enough sleep
 - Healthy Lifestyle
 - Hygiene
 - No stress
 - Health insurance
6. Housing
7. Political participation
 - Matured
 - Free voice
 - To be included
 - Brave
8. Education and scholarship
9. Internet
 - IT savvy
 - Have smartphone and gadgets
10. Spirituality
 - Role model
 - Responsibility
 - Free from corruptions
 - Good heart
 - Grateful
11. Money and wealth
 - Good Economy
 - Savings
 - Extra income
 - Enough income
 - Debt free
 - Business
12. Peace and serenity life, and environmental cleanliness
13. Good relationships with other people
14. Facilities and effective public transport.

Discussion & Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the contributing factors that contribute to the well-being of the Malaysia youth. Results revealed that recognition, love, self-time, entertainment, health, education and scholarship, internet, spirituality, money and wealth, peacefulness, good relationship with other, and effective facilities are the factors that contribute to the well-being of Malaysian youth. Youth mentioning of having good relationships with immediate family and friends affects their well-being is supported by the previous study by Woddman and McArthur (2017). In relation to health, youth revealed that living with no stress and having health insurance is important to increasing the well-being. It shows that youth nowadays are very concerned about their own health and comprehend that prevention is better than cure.

One of the interesting findings from the study is about money and wealth. Nevertheless, Idris, Krishnan and Azmi (2013) stated that youths also are at risk to get trapped into situations of credit as they wish to enjoy a more lavish lifestyle which they cannot afford. As our youths today are regarded as future leaders, such an attitude can become a cause of concern for the future of our nation. Previous studies found that wealth is related to many positive outcomes in life. For the youth, the need to have financial stability and free of debts will increase the well-being and their standard of living will be upgraded. However, the study by Kasser and Ahuvia (2002) shows that the youth who searches materialistic suffer from lower well-being and having distress. Undeniably, the luxury of life of some celebrities shown at social media influence how youth spend the money. Therefore, the element of spirituality is never can be abandoned. This is because a higher or deeper religious person will make them better in social relationships, improved health (less disease), less stress and fewer depressive feelings and more importantly they will feel that their lives will be more meaningful and interesting.

This study highlighted some important findings that could be used as guidelines in conducting further research on the well-being of youth in Malaysia. As a conclusion, there are many factors that contribute to the well-being of the Malaysia youth. For policy makers, this can help them to narrow down on what can go wrong in people's lives, in this case, is the youth, by looking also at things that make people's lives go well. Interventions implemented on improving youth well-being should cover on individual, family, learning institutions as well as community level.

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Corresponding Author

Email: nm_aini@upm.edu.my

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