

Correlation between Boredom and Meaning of Life in Late Adolescence during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic period caused various limitation in activities which can lead to boredom in late adolescence. Boredom that occurs from time to time may cause various psychological negative effects, including loss of meaning in life. This study aims to determine the relationship between boredom and meaning of life in late adolescence during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research was conducted using a Multidimensional State Boredom Scale by Fahlman and Multidimensional Existential Meaning Scale by George and Park. This research involved 407 late adolescences across the country which consists of 64 males and 343 females. The analysis result between boredom and meaning of life used spearman correlation technique. The result of both variables correlation shows that there is a negative and significant correlation between boredom and meaning of life.

Keywords: boredom, meaning of life, late adolescence, Covid-19 Pandemic

1. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus or often referred to as Covid-19 is one of the largest pathogens that attacks the human respiratory system [1]. The virus first emerged in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province as a hard-to-identify pneumonia case [2]. This virus is growing so rapidly, that by the end of September 2020 in Indonesia there were already 57,796 cases [3]. The transmission of the Covid-19 virus occurred so quickly in all countries that the WHO finally declared the Covid-19 virus a pandemic on March 11th, 2020[4]. As a preventive measure to breaking the chain of Covid-19 virus, the government has implemented several policies including Large-Scale Social Restrictions or PSBB [5], work from home (WFH), and social distancing [4].

The policies implemented as an effort to slow the spread of Covid-19 have an impact on various age groups, one of which is the late adolescence. Adolescence occurs at the age of 12 to 21 years and late adolescence is in the age range of 17 to 21 years [6]. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) states that in 2019, late adolescents are the second largest population with a total of approximately 22,294,200 people with an age range of 15-19 years and approximately 21,917,600 people with an age range of 20-24 years.

Adolescence is often associated with a period of searching for identity, identity, values, and beliefs [7]. Finding Meaning of life is also one of the important tasks during adolescence [8]. Adolescents who have difficulty finding meaning in their lives can experience emotional problems, suicidal thoughts, and other psychological stresses.

Changes in social interaction patterns during the pandemic can be an obstacle for late adolescence to reach their potential. Reduced social contact and quarantine can cause a person to experience boredom [9]. Boredom is a condition that causes individuals to be unable to engage in an activity and trapped in an unsatisfactory present [10]. Based on the results of a national survey on 2,135 participants during the pandemic in China, it was found that boredom was the most frequently experienced emotion, followed by anxiety and [11].

Boredom is also associated with various negative effects such as depression, drug use, and suicide at a young age [12]. In addition, boredom has a strong association with the meaning of life [13]. The meaning of life can be defined as (1) the meaning of the world which includes belief in the world, or (2) the purpose of an individual's life [14].

Individuals who lose the meaning of life or personal goals will tend to experience a feeling of stagnation which is also often found in conditions of chronic boredom. Individuals who experience chronic boredom often also have a feeling of emptiness that makes the individual passive towards his life [13].

Previous research once conducted a survey three times regarding the relationship between boredom and the meaning of life [13]. The first survey was conducted on 138 psychology students consisting of 77% women with an average age of 19.4 years. In this survey, the research also measured 2 other variables, namely depression and anxiety to see their effect on boredom and the meaning of life [13]. The second survey was conducted on 88 participants consisting of 77% of women with a mean age of 19.5 years.

This second survey was conducted at two different times with a difference of three to eight weeks. Then the last one was a survey and also mood manipulation on 106 psychology students consisting of 73% women with an average age of 20.1 years. Based on the three studies, it was found that the meaning of life has a stronger relationship with boredom than with depression and anxiety.

The meaning of life can also predict a person's level of boredom for the next three to eight weeks. Changing views on the meaning of life can change the prediction of boredom levels [13]. Meanwhile, changes in mood such as happy or sad have a small effect on the level of boredom.

Lack of a sense of meaning in life can be a major factor in the development of chronic boredom [15]. The loss of meaning in life can lead to disruption of psychosocial regulation, stress-response systems, a sense of control, optimism, and also one's physical health [14]. This brings an urgency for this research because good physical and immune health can enable a person to get through a pandemic [1]. Besides that, the previous research has never correlate pandemic factors to boredom in adolescents, nor has this research been conducted in Indonesia, the authors wanted to know the relationship between boredom and the meaning of life in late adolescence during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1. Boredom

Boredom is the presence of dissatisfaction and difficulty to be involved in an environment and or activity that is being done [13]. Another research also explains that empirically boredom is divided into three main categories, namely boredom as a 'trait' or nature, boredom as a 'state' or the consequences of boredom [16]. Boredom as a 'trait' or individual trait focuses on the tendency and vulnerability of individuals to experience boredom. While boredom as a 'state' focuses on the prevalence of boredom situations and their causes.

2.1.1. Components of Boredom

Boredom is defined in five components, namely disengagement, high arousal, low arousal inattention and time perception [17]. Based on the results of qualitative analysis, disengagement is the main component of boredom which is defined by three factors, namely, (a) not having things to do, (b) not knowing what to do, and (c) being forced to do something unwanted [17]. Boredom is often characterized by a high desire for anxiety, agitation, and frustration. However, boredom is also characterized by low individual desires so that it can cause feelings of dissatisfaction, emptiness, and fatigue [17]. Individuals who are prone to experiencing boredom are also prone to experiencing other negative emotions, including low-desire emotions such as loneliness and depression, as well as high-desire emotions such as aggression [16]. Then the third

component is inattention or the inability to pay attention to something. Boredom occurs when (a) individuals do not succeed in engaging their attention to internal (such as thoughts and feelings) or external (such as environmental stimuli) information needed to perform a satisfying activity, (b) individuals realize that they are not able to engage and participate in satisfying activities, (c) attributing the causes of boredom to the environment such as having the thought that the task at hand is very boring [10]. The last component of boredom is time perception. People who are bored will perceive time to run slower [17].

2.2. Meaning of Life

The meaning of life is described as a purpose-directed life or a life filled with purpose [18]. Meanwhile, another research state that the meaning of life is a feeling that the world can be predicted and controlled [19].

The meaning of life is divided into two levels [19]. The first level is low level meaning. Individuals who are at a low level of meaning focus on details and specifics. At this level, individuals are able to make changes and have an influence on a matter or problem. The second level is high level meaning. Individuals who are at high level meaning are more focused on making long-term connections and big goals. At high level meaning, individuals are able to provide guidance based on values and principles intelligently. Individuals who encounter problems often use low-level meaning to find solutions to problems and make changes [19]. When the situation has improved, the individual will refocus on high-level meaning. Changing the level from low to high gives satisfaction so that it enables the individual to overcome suffering and increase a sense of positivity and feelings of meaning.

2.2.1. Components of Meaning of Life

The meaning of life can be understood through the four needs for meaning [20]. The first is the need for purpose. This need emphasizes how future goals can provide direction in the present so that it seems as if the individual is moving towards that goal. subjective. The second need is the need for values. This need enables the individual to judge an action and gives a positive feeling to life. Then the third need is the need for a sense of efficacy. This need will provide individuals with a belief that they are capable of doing things and making changes. The last need is the need for self-worth (need for a basis for self-worth). These needs can be met individually by being superior to others, or collectively by finding self-confidence from being involved in a group [19].

2.2.2. Meaning of Life in Late Adolescence

The meaning of life is an important task that needs to be achieved during adolescence [8]. In everyday life, adolescence can experience various life-changing events, so that through these events the late adolescent is able to explore and find the meaning of his life. This process of

finding meaning in life can provide late teens with personal growth as well as various good mental health [8]. However, if adolescents have difficulty in finding the meaning of their life, it can have negative impacts such as emotional problems, suicidal thoughts, and also psychosomatic complaints.

2.3. Late Adolescence

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood which is characterized by physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes [7]. Adolescence occurs at the age of 12 to 21 years, while the age limit for late adolescence is 17 to 21 years [6]. There are several characteristics that mark late adolescence [6]. First, adolescents begin to show attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors that are increasingly mature in their efforts to see themselves as adults. Second, late adolescence has stable emotions, making it easier and smoother to interact with parents. Third, late adolescence is able to determine the direction of life wisely even though the direction of life they have is not yet complete. And lastly, late adolescence has their own way of life and are carried out responsibly towards themselves, their parents, and society.

2.3.1. Late Adolescent Physical Development

Physical growth in adolescents is marked by the occurrence of puberty [7]. Puberty is the process by which a person will gain sexual maturity and the ability to reproduce. This development occurs rapidly at the age of 9 to 14 years for women and 10 to 16 years for men [7]. Women will also reach their maximum height at the age of 15 years and men at the age of 17 years. So that late teens aged 18 to 21 years already have perfect sexual maturity and a prime body.

2.3.2. Late Adolescent Cognitive Development

Late adolescence has been at the cognitive level of formal operations [7]. At this level, individuals are able to think abstractly and reason well. Piaget added that cognitive development in adolescence is a combination of a growing mind and expanding opportunities in the external environment so that late teens have a more mature and wise mindset.

2.3.3. Psychosocial Development of Late Adolescents

Adolescence is a time of searching for identity and identity [7]. At this time, adolescents will find career choices, the values of life they hold, and the development of satisfying sexual identities. Adolescence who grows up with supportive relationships from parents, school, and community will tend to develop in a positive and healthy way [7]

2.4. The Covid-19 Pandemic

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), a pandemic is a disease outbreak that spreads simultaneously in various large geographic areas. In early December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province, several cases of pneumonia of unknown origin were identified [2]. This disease comes from a pathogen that works by infecting RNA and causing acute disorders of the respiratory system such as SARS-CoV-2. The viruses such as SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV, and other influenza pathogens spread through respiratory droplets and direct contact [2]. The World Health Organization (WHO) finally named this disease as Covid-19 at the end of 2019

2.4.1. Social Development during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Since February 29th, 2020 the Indonesian government has issued a disaster emergency status. The Covid-19 virus is not an epidemic that can be ignored. Along with this phenomenon, the government issued several policies to anticipate and reduce the number of Covid-19 sufferers in Indonesia. Some of them are providing policies to limit activities outside the home or activities that involve crowds such as schooling from home, working from home, and also doing worship from home. These activities that are forced to be carried out from home are the result of a policy called lockdown. The implementation of the lockdown was carried out to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in an area. In addition to the lockdown, to reduce or break the chain of Covid-19 infections, social distancing is also carried out. Social distancing requires humans to maintain a distance of at least two meters, not to make direct contact, and to avoid mass gatherings. Changes in social interaction during this pandemic can lead to conflict. People who were initially able to directly interact socially had to undergo changes and adjustments. Changes in conditions that come suddenly make people not ready to face it both physically and psychologically [4]. Having support from friends and family can help a person through various crises in life. However, the limitation of social interaction during the pandemic causes individuals to not receive sufficient support from friends and family, which can lead to feelings of stress. Stressful and challenging situations can shape the meaning of one's life [14]. The existence of this meaning in life can affect psychosocial regulation, stress-response system, sense of control, optimism, as well as improve one's physical health [14]. Good physical and immune health can enable a person to get through a pandemic [1]. A strong immune system is able to withstand the development of the Covid-19 virus infection [1].

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Research participants are in late adolescence with age range (17-21 years), and carried out most of the activities at home for approximately the last three months. The measuring

instrument used in this study are Multidimensional State Boredom Scale (MSBS)[17] and Multidimensional Existential Meaning Scale (MEMS)[21] which has been adapted into Indonesian language. MSBS has a total of 29 items to measure five dimensions of Boredom: disengagement (N= 10), high arousal (N= 5), low arousal (N= 5), inattention (N=4) and time perception (N= 5). The MSBS measuring instrument in this study has a Cronbach alpha value of 0.75 – 0.96 in under-stimulating boredom, 0.81-0.97 in overstimulating boredom situation, and 0.75-0.94 in normal boredom situation for each domain. Another measurement instrument used, MEMS, has a total of 25 items to measure three dimensions of Boredom: comprehension (N= 5), purpose (N= 5), and mattering (N=4). The MEMS measuring instrument in this study has a Cronbach alpha value of 0.75 – 0.85 for each domain.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Researchers have tested the classical assumption before testing the hypothesis. The classical assumption test was carried out using the normality test, both on the boredom variable and the meaning of life. The normality test of the data used one-sample analysis of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z. After the normality test, it was found that the boredom variable was normally distributed while the meaning of life variable was not normally distributed. This is indicated by the p value (asymptotic significance) on the boredom variable greater than 0.05, while the p value on the meaning of life variable is less than 0.05. Based on the results of the normality test, then hypothesis testing was carried out using the Spearman correlation analysis technique because one of the data variables was not normally distributed. Based on the results of the correlation test using the Spearman correlation analysis technique, the results obtained that the boredom variable has a significant and negative relationship with the meaning of life variable. This is indicated by the value of $r(407) = -0.226$ and the value of $p = 0.000 < 0.05$.

Table 1 The Results of the Correlation Hypothesis Test for Boredom Variables and the Meaning of Life

Boredom with Meaning of Life	
r	-0.226
P	0.000

5. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out by the researchers, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between boredom and the meaning of life in late adolescents during the Covid-19 pandemic so that the research hypothesis (H1) is accepted.

5.2 Discussion

The results show that boredom has a negative correlation with the meaning of life in late adolescence during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is in line with the opinion the past researcher who stated that the lack of a sense of meaning in life can be a major factor in the development of chronic boredom [15]. Changing the view of the meaning of life can change the prediction of the level of boredom [13]. Overall, the average late adolescence experienced a fairly high level of boredom during the Covid-19 pandemic. The average late adolescence in this study did most of their activities at home during the last three months, which can be a factor in the emergence of the boredom. Meanwhile, adolescence emphasizes social competence, independence, self-confidence, and intimacy [7]. The limited access to activities that late adolescence has to achieve these things can also be another factor that causes boredom to emerge. Of all the dimensions of boredom, the average late adolescent has a high score on the disengagement dimension. It can be concluded that the average late adolescence in Indonesia experienced are having a decreased interest in daily activities carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic. The decrease in interest can be in the form of bad performance in their studies or a reduced variety of activities that late adolescence wants to do. Furthermore, when viewed from the results of the analysis between the dimensions of the boredom variable and the meaning of life variable, the low arousal dimension is the dimension that has the strongest relationship with the meaning of life. Here are two examples of low arousal dimension items, "I feel lonely" and "I don't seem to have anyone I can talk to around me". Individuals who are prone to experiencing boredom are also prone to other negative emotions such as loneliness and emptiness [16]. The existence of cultural differences is also a factor in the high value of the low arousal dimension in this study. East Asians tend to have higher low arousal and lower high arousal scores than Europeans and Americans [22]. Ng et al. (2015) added, this can happen because there are differences in the internalization of cultural values that occur between Asians and European Americans. But on the other hand, the time perception dimension has a weak relationship with the meaning of life. The following are two examples of time perception dimension statements, "I wish time could run faster" and "Right now time seems to be running very slowly". The perception of the speed at which time passes occurs as long as a person does an activity (or does not do an activity) [23]. When a person is faced with new experiences, time tends to run faster. The condition of the Covid-19 pandemic has become a condition full of new changes so that people are busy adapting to a new way of life [23]. This can be one of the factors that makes a person, especially the average late teenager, not feel time is running slower. From the results of the analysis, it can also be concluded that the increasing sense of boredom will make the meaning of life of late adolescence decrease. Late adolescence who experience decreased interest in daily activities, also

experience feelings of loss of goals to be achieved. This is in line with the opinion of the previous research, that when a person experiences chronic boredom, there is often a feeling of emptiness that makes the individual passive in his life [11].

The mattering dimension is the dimension that has the strongest relationship value with the boredom variable. This explains that the more the late adolescence feel important and valuable in the world, the lower the boredom they will feel.

5.3. Suggestions

Suggestions for further research is to use a questionnaire that has several negative items to avoid acquiescence bias. In addition, for a deeper understanding of the variables of boredom and the meaning of life, further research can examine the causal correlation between the two variables. In addition, further research can link the variables of boredom and the meaning of life with other secondary variables. Examples of variables that can be linked include loneliness, use of social media, or depression. Future research can also examine other age groups to get a broader picture of this phenomenon.

With this research, it is hoped that it can be a preventive measure for the negative impacts of boredom and the loss of meaning in life felt by late adolescence during the Covid-19 pandemic. Late adolescence is expected to know the importance of having meaning in life when going through crisis conditions such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Some examples of efforts that late adolescence can do are like finding a new hobby or maintaining the frequency of contact with friends or closest people so that they don't feel bored or lonely. With this research, it is also hoped that parents or education staff will be able to understand the situation that is being felt by late adolescence during this Covid-19 pandemic. It is hoped that parents or education personnel can help late adolescence find their passion and provide the best support so that late adolescence are protected from the negative impacts that can be caused by increasing boredom and loss of meaning in life.

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