SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY, KELANTAN

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Abstract. Life in university is a steppingstone and a new challenge for student in learning process. University is a place where students are started to be independent, learning new things and being introduced with various academic syllabus, university activities and curriculum that differs from school. Learning system in university are much complex and packed causing students' mental health easily disturbed. Social support is vital to ensure a person have an individual or group which they trust and rely on, consist of family, friends or significant others. The general objective of this study is to assess the social support and subjective well-being among undergraduate students in School of Health Sciences USM. A cross-sectional study was conducted involved 333 participants using self-administered questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Chi Square test using Statistical Package Social Science (SPSS) version 26.0. Majority of students have high level of social support 184 (%55.3), 140 (42%) recorded moderate social support meanwhile only 9 (2.7%) recorded low social support. The mean value for subjective well-being is 4.67 (SD= 1.478). Chi Square revealed that there is significant association between social support and subjective well-being ($p<0.001$). In summary, the result of this study showed that social support has an impact towards subjective well-being since it is importance for the formation of student to overcome challenges and psychological and behavioral problems in university.
Keywords: *social support, subjective well-being, undergraduate student, public university*

Introduction

Social support is described as the network of social resources that an individual perceives. It provides emotional, instrumental or informational resources to help an individual cope with stress and life events. Social support consists of people who having a family, friends, or a group of people that they can count on in specific times of trouble. Social support is significant in life as it helps to maintain good physical and mental health. It is proved that high quality of social support may contribute to prevent the developing of trauma-related psychopathology, increase self-control and improve resilience to stress (Pilcher and Bryant, 2016). Subjective well-being (SWB) is how people evaluate their own life, (Diener et al.,2017) It determines how someone label the satisfaction of life and how they determine and feel what is a good life. The previous study showed that people with positive SWB were associated with decreased mortality, increased longevity, improved immunity, and reduced stress and able to overcome stress-inducing situation (Lasselin et al., 2016). According to Zimet et al. (1990), there are three categories of social supports such as family, friend, and special person. A study discovered that perceived social support predicted 43% of SWB, family support is significant and it is major contributed to SWB (Gülaçtı, 2010). University life can be stressful and challenging due to the changes in living arrangements, social activities, studies, and environment to some extent become a pressure and may contribute to social

isolation and loneliness. According to Matud et al. (2020), lack of social relationship contributed to physical and mental health problems and loneliness has association with presence of physical and mental health problem. In addition, it reduced immune system, low quality of sleep, increased psychological stress and increased symptoms of depression and anxiety (Vasileiou et al., 2019).

One of many reasons that contribute to loneliness is the absence of social support. Some students often spend their time alone since they have no friends or people they can communicate with and rely on. Factors that influence lack of social support in a family are financial income, unhealthy environment, separation, and parents' negligence. Commonly, students that lack social support from friends are those whom they do not have any friends dueto socially anxious, low self-esteem and lackof confidence to pursue relationship. A study reported that 32.4% of students experience moderate loneliness, while 3.2% reported severely lonely (Diehl et al., 2018). Social support has become a significant level to determine an individual's well-being and satisfaction of life, reduces anxiety and increase subjective well-being (Huang et al., 2021; Lazányi et al., 2017). Subjective well-being is also related to mental health and happiness. The increasing demand of counseling and specialized mental health services in institutions is concerned where a study reported that 88% of 274 institutions increase severe psychological problem including learning disabilities, self-injury incidents, eating disorders, substance uses and sexual assaults (Pedrelli et al., 2015).Therefore, it is crucial to assess the onset of mental health problems to prevent the risk of severe complications health related in the future. Therefore, the aim of this study is to assess social support and subjective well-being among undergraduate students in the School of Health Sciences in Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Materials and Methods

The cross-sectional study design is used to assess the social support and subjective well-being among undergraduate students in School of Health Sciences USM. The study setting was conducted after received an approval from the Human Ethics Committee, USM (USM/JEPeM/22120789) which is from January 2023 to August 2023. The sampling method that used in this study is stratified random sampling. The sample was selected among undergraduate students in School of Health Sciences and the sample size estimation divided equally for each year of study. Each individual has the same probability of being chosen during the sampling process to avoid bias. The instrument used is focused on social support and subjective well-being adapted from Zimet et al. (1990) and Diener et al. (1985). Section A consist of demographic data, Section B contained 12-item designed to measure the perceived adequacy of social support from three different categories which are family, friends and significant others. Each of these categories was assessed with four items. The available responses are in the form of a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=very strongly disagree to 7=very strongly agree). Section C contained 5-items questionnaires designed to measure global cognitive judgements of satisfaction with one's life. The available responses are in the form of a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=very strongly disagree to 7=very strongly agree). The score for perceived social support and subjective well-being presented in *Table 1* and *Table 2*.

Table 1. *Scores for perceived social support.*

Score	Level of perceived social support
12-35	Low
36-60	Moderate
61-84	High

Table 2. *Scores for subjective well-being.*

Score	Level of subjective well being
31-35	Extremely satisfied
26-30	Satisfied
21-25	Slightly satisfied
20	Neutral
15-19	Slightly dissatisfied
10-14	Dissatisfied
5-9	Extremely dissatisfied

Results and Discussion

Level of social support among undergraduate students

Level of social support in this study showed that students perceived a high level of social support with the mean (SD) 2.53 (0.552). The participants of 184 (55.3%) have a high level of social support (*Table 3*). It is corresponding with a study conducted in Universiti Malaya (Lim et al., 2020) also showed that university students have high level of perceived social support with mean (SD) 33.42 (6.17) out of 44.00 and study from Samson (2020) revealed 68.2% of students perceived high level of social support. Although this study showed a high level of perceived social support, some studies revealed dissimilar results. 67.7% of students perceived moderate social support and students in another study reported in moderate category with mean (SD) 62.64 (15.52) (McLean et al., 2022; Sulistyorini and Roswiyani, 2021).

Table 3. *Level of social support among undergraduate students.*

Level	Frequency [N] (Percentage [%])	Mean	Standard deviation
Low	9 (2.7)	2.53	0.552
Moderate	140 (42.0)		
High	184 (55.3)		

In this study showed that type of social support perceived the most by students are family, friends and significant other, respectively (*Table 4*). Although students can therefore be away from family, the connection between family members is sturdy. Strong relationship with family influence a person life, provide greater sense of meaning and purpose as well as social and tangible resources that benefits well-being (Thomas et al., 2017). Moreover, students often encounter stressful experiences in university including course work, exams, assignment deadlines which allow them to find support from others to overcome the stress. Friends are the ones that are close to students in university and experiencingthesame scenarios.Support from friendsimprove social skillsand academic performances (Schmidt, 2020). Perceived social support from family andfriendsincrease students' ability to cope and overcome difficulties (Mai et al.,

2021). The low number of social supports from significant others may be due to lack of time, unprepared for commitment and young age to have someone special in life.

Table 4. *Type of social support perceived.*

Level	Mean	Standard deviation
Family	5.38	1.27
Friends	5.04	1.30
Significant others	5.03	1.58

Level of subjective well-being among undergraduate students

121 out of 333 undergraduate students in this study mostly showed slightly satisfied with their life (*Table 5*). Undergraduate students are mostly in the age of 19 to 25 years old, which most of them may not have adequate achievements due to limitation of time and money during study. Although most student recorded to have satisfied category level of SWB, number of students in dissatisfied category is still concerning. SWB is crucial to determine overall individual's life satisfaction which covers economic, social, and physical well-being. In addition, psychological well-being is a component in SWB. Sleep, time spent on social media and life condition and many other components of SWB are influenced the academic performance of student (Chattu et al., 2020). Students with high level of SWB are commonly historied with positive incomes of relationship, financial, economic stable which contributed to positive outcome in life. High level of SWB is associated with better physical mental and academic growth (Western and Tomaszewski, 2016). The university and the public should be more aware of the SWB of student to produce quality students who are physically and emotionally stable. Students are the future of a country. Social activities, academic guidance, skills workshop and various types of interventions handled by university contribute to shaping the personality of students, should be increased. Level of SWB influenced an individual life experience, decision making and academic achievements.

Table 5. *Level of social support among undergraduate students.*

Level	Frequency [N] (Percentage [%])	Mean	Standard deviation
Extremely satisfied	30 (9.0)	4.67	1.478
Satisfied	70 (21.0)		
Slightly satisfied	121 (36.3)		
Neutral	20 (6.0)		
Slightly dissatisfied	61 (18.3)		
Dissatisfied	27 (8.1)		
Extremely dissatisfied	4 (1.2)		

Association between social support and subjective well-being

The association between social support (SS) and subjective well-being (SWB) in this study is significant ($p<0.001$) (*Table 6*). This result same as study conducted by Huang et al. (2021) which SS effectively predicts SWB, family ($p=0.041$), friends ($p<0.001$) and significant others ($p=0.02$). Social support not only affects the subjective feeling, it enhance individual's material environment similarly to financial assistance, material resources, and needs financial help from family, friends and significant other to improve

SWB (Huang et al., 2021). Many studies show that individual with high level of SS will be more inclined to have better life in terms of mental, physical, and social. They have a strong backbone in life to help in decision making, guidance, listeners, financial supporter, academic partners, and others to be part in an individual's life. Students need to be supported during their studies for them to identify their specific resources and learn or obtain resources they lack based on their circumstances and experiences (Donald and Jackson, 2022).

Table 6. *Association between social support and subjective well-being.*

Characteristic for satisfaction of life	Perceived social support [N(%)]			p-value
	Low	Moderate	High	
Extremely satisfied	0 (0.0)	1 (0.3)	29 (8.7)	0.000
Satisfied	1 (0.3)	14 (4.2)	55 (16.5)	
Slightly satisfied	1 (0.3)	48 (14.4)	72 (21.6)	
Neutral	0 (0.0)	12 (3.6)	8 (2.4)	
Slightly dissatisfied	1 (0.3)	43 (12.9)	17 (5.1)	
Dissatisfied	5 (1.5)	19 (5.7)	3 (0.9)	
Extremely dissatisfied	1 (0.3)	3 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study finding shows that most undergraduate students in School of Health Sciences have high level of social support and slightly satisfied level in subjective well-being. There is significant association between social support and subjective well-being. In this study, approach and intervention for student on both measures should be established for an effective social support system among undergraduate students. Offering interpersonal courses to improve social skills, better communication, and interaction as an addition to increase their social support. Therefore, high social support will result in a high level of subjective well-being.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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