

Conference Paper

The Role of Optimism in Responding to Covid-19

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Abstract

Optimism is a psychological phenomenon that influences many areas of life, optimistic individuals always look positively on every event in life. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many changes to human life, virus which in some cases is deadly and spreads in short time. This article is a literature study assessing the role of optimism in responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. The results and discussion showed that optimism had a good impact on individuals, reducing anxiety and fear, but optimism must lead to positive behavior as well, do not let individual optimism override all policies and protocols to prevent the spread of viruses.

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, Optimism

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1. Introduction

Optimism is psychological phenomenon that influences many areas of life, optimism is one of individual attitudes in responding to event in life with positive outlook, Scheier and Caver (Qiu et al., 2020) view the optimism disposition as balanced personality characteristic in many times and situations, which influences the way a person views events in life at present, past and future, in his research it is said that optimistic people always look positively on every event in life. The Covid-19 pandemic caused by new virus that emerged at the end of 2019 called Coronavirus has brought many changes to human life, virus which in some cases is deadly and spreads in short time, causing fear to all people on earth. The damages caused by Covid-19 not only influence the physical and mental health sectors, but other sectors such as the economy and education, human systems and routines have also changed, starting from how to socialize, the education system, to the country's economy and also the world experiencing changes that are not small. Even though every human being has different ways of thinking, optimism in

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person has important role in the process of thinking and acting in various situations and conditions, including in the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the midst of Covid-19 pandemic most activities were carried out online. Access to information and news can be obtained through social media. The ease of technology allows anyone to spread information quickly. Quoted from Kompas news, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology detected 1,1016 hoax issues related to Covid-19 spread across 1,912 platforms (Halim, 2020). Various bad news about pandemics that circulate every day, the uncertainty of when the pandemic will end, the changing of many living systems into a new normal causes confusion, fear, and anxiety for almost all humans on earth. Anxiety about uncertainty and new rules being enforced add to the psychological burden on many people around the world. For individuals with built-in optimism, they will look at and face every event in life positively, including every event that has impact on the Covid-19 pandemic. In this study, researchers looked at whether optimism had effect on how to respond and adapt to the individual's ability to face the Covid-19 pandemic and all its effects.

2. Literature Review

In many studies it has been found that optimism correlates with many aspects of human life from daily experiences, health, and adaptability. In responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, optimism is needed so that the information and phenomena seen are not immediately responded with negativity because it will also have negative impact on individuals, optimism correlates with individual welfare, pessimistic people correlate with excessive complaints (Martínez-Correa, Reyes del Paso, García-León, & González-Jareño, 2006). In new normal life as result of the corona virus threat, good adaptations are needed, so that person can immerse himself in new life that is different from what he lived before. There are several psychological problems associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, namely panic, stress, and depression that come from circulating information such as information on person-to-person transmission, strict quarantine as well an increase in the status of Covid-19 to Pandemic (Qiu et al., 2020) in responding to this matter, optimism has been shown to be positively correlated with coping strategies to eliminate and regulate negative emotions and stressors (Conversano et al., 2010), optimists are also able to manage adversity more efficiently. High optimism also predicts higher level of preventive action being put in place to tackle the spread of Covid-19 (Jovančević & Miličević, 2020).

3. Method

In this research, the method used was literature study related to the theme to gather various views on how optimism is in responding to Covid-19 pandemic. The steps in literature research according to Kuhlthau (2002) are: (1) selecting topic, (2) exploring information, (3) determining research focus, (4) collecting data sources, (5) preparing data presentation, and (6) compiling report. The study was carried out through various articles, journals and news. The search method used keywords “optimism role”, “pandemic” and “Covid-19”. After that we sort the data and analysed.

4. Result and Discussion

Coronavirus is like a sudden blow to the world community. From the start, the pandemic produced various crises. Articles and media show that young people have pessimistic view about the future such as job prospects, health, welfare and others, besides that in terms of employment the pandemic has forced many workers to be laid off and lose their jobs. Pessimism arises due to thoughts and feelings that they cannot control the pandemic situation and do not have many options, especially with the advice to stay at home to reduce the spread of the virus (Huebner & Arya, 2020), the suggestion to stay at home makes many people feel depressed and lose productivity. Doing work from home creates new social pressures, such as stress (Adit, 2020) Through many studies and articles published since Covid-19 appeared there have been many results that showed the optimism contribution to individual responses in responding to Covid-19 pandemic, optimism helps individuals in responding to pandemic Covid-19 is not only in terms of health but also from positive social side, optimistic individuals tend not to be pressured by new policies taken by policy makers because optimistic individuals believe that they can control their beliefs because they consider their beliefs relevant to tackling the spread of Covid-19 (Jovančević & Milićević, 2020).

Responding to pandemic is not only responding to the arrival of virus and the status increase to pandemic, but also responding to various information circulating, information circulating among the public is often full of bad and scary news, especially in the current era of technology where information is more easily accepted by users of devices and internet, exposure to news and information on daily basis can increase the perception of threats and activate the “fight or flight” response which will lead to both physical and mental problems (Garfin, Silver, & Holman, 2020), people with optimism can filter the news so that it does not influence their mental stability because The positive outlook

they have can reduce anxiety and fear, because optimistic people tend to expect good things to happen compared to bad things, in contrast to the pessimistic attitude that assumes everything negatively, the Covid-19 pandemic might be considered as threats and only see the negative side. Still in relation to the information circulating, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the news that appears everyday is not only news that has clear credibility, fake news and also conspiracy theories also circulate massively, news like this tends to bring lot of anxiety and skepticism in the crowd, accepting more irrelevant information leads to higher level of fear. In response to information like this, it was found that low trust in things like conspiracy theories like the corona virus is deliberately made, pessimists are vulnerable to being influenced by misinformation because they are less able to filter and control the information they get.

Every individual needs to learn to cultivate optimism in themselves to be able to prevent themselves from thoughts that will make them sick. A high level of optimism and flexibility can help people cope the stress caused by Covid-19 and reduce the rate of psychological problems to lesser extent. In relation to stress during the pandemic which is raised by various factors as described, handling and management of stress during pandemic must be done, individuals with high optimism try to find solutions in life during this pandemic and have good coping strategies, meanwhile pessimistic individuals tend to only condemn the situation without trying to find solution. With coping strategies and high optimism, optimistic people have low stress levels and high life satisfaction (Conversano et al., 2010). Although optimism has positive role in responding to pandemic, at the beginning of pandemic it was found that in Europe, the people were too optimistic about this virus, which led to unrealistic thinking that they took less prevention than other communities. Optimism, which has proven to have good impact on individuals, is expected to be practiced by wider audience, so that anxiety and fear that causes psychological burden will be reduced and people can view the Covid-19 pandemic as more positive, but optimism must lead to positive behavior as well. Do not let individual optimism override all policies and protocols for preventing the spread of viruses.

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