

Personality of Conscientiousness and Perfectionism on the Subjective Well-Being of University Students

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ABSTRACT: Subjective well-being among university students presents their overall happiness and individual life satisfaction during a specific life stage. In this regard, understanding subjective well-being among university students can create a university environment that supports and encourages overall student success. However, the personality traits of conscientiousness and perfectionism seem to play an important role in influencing the subjective well-being of university students. This study was carried out to identify the personality level of conscientiousness, perfectionism and subjective well-being of students. The research design uses a quantitative approach in the form of a survey study. The sample of this study consisted of 380 undergraduate students of National University of Malaysia (UKM) who used a simple random sampling technique. For research instruments, researchers used the Chernyshenko Conscientiousness Scale (CCS), Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale and Life Satisfaction Scale. The results of the study show that the students' level of conscientiousness (mean=2.54, SD=0.23) and perfectionism (mean=3.00, SD=0.40), respectively, is at a medium-low level. The subjective well-being of university students (mean= 4.22, SD=0.86) are at a high level. In conclusion, by understanding the personality traits of conscientiousness and perfectionism, students can take advantage of the positive aspects of both while promoting productivity and achieving goals without neglecting the well-being of students while continuing their studies at university.

KEYWORDS –conscientiousness personality, perfectionism, subjective well-being, undergraduate students

I. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underline that well-being is one of the important elements that influence sustainable development. According to Diener et al., (2018), subjective well-being is one of the things that is increasingly given focus, especially the factors that influence and the consequences related to subjective well-being. Moore & Diener (2019) explained that subjective well-being is a positive life without involving negative feelings such as fear and anxiety. This well-being refers to life satisfaction that consists of affective and cognitive components, which is the extent to which individuals evaluate their lives (Diener & Oishi, 2000). A statistical report released by the WHO (2022) shows that the number of individuals suffering from depression has increased by 28%. The number of individuals suffering from anxiety disorders increased by 26% in the period from 2019 to 2020. Donald & Jackson (2022) found that students in higher education in the United Kingdom experienced low subjective well-being due to social isolation, deteriorating health and stress in academics and work.

In addition, the well-being of university students in Malaysia shows a high percentage of suffering from depression, anxiety and stress, which is as much as 95% (Kotera et al., 2021). Well-being among university students has garnered substantial attention due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic; i.e.

students experience stress as much as 17.78% and anxiety 42.23% (Husin et al., 2022). In addition, Kumar et al. (2022) found that university students experience high stress (89%), sleep disorders (91.4%) and experience high emotional problems (91.5%). Therefore, the problem of low subjective well-being can be seen when most university students face financial problems (Noraznida Husin, 2021), physical and mental fatigue (Ramli, 2020), psychological health disorders, behavioral problems, sleep disorders and social relationships (Yadav & Prakash, 2020).

One of the aspects that need to be paid attention to in studying the issue of subjective well-being of students is conscientiousness personality. This personality explains the cognitive, affective and behavioral tendencies of each individual and promotes the subjective well-being of university students (Joshnanloo, 2023). According to Rocha et al. (2022), students with high conscientiousness have characteristics such as hardworking, diligent, organised, and good self-control, which has a positive effect on life satisfaction. They also have a higher academic engagement and are more active. On the other hand, these students show a tendency towards perfectionism (Coleman et al., 2023). In this regard, these students cultivate a negative trait of extreme conscientiousness because of the desire for perfection and obsession with achieving standards (Samuel et al., 2012). This shows that although high conscientiousness can lead to positive effects, this trait has negative effects when overdone. In this light, research on conscientiousness is important as it is consistently associated with favorable outcomes such as academic achievement, and individual well-being (Trautwein et al., 2009). However, there are still limited studies on conscientiousness and subjective well-being among university students.

Other factors, such as perfectionism, have also been found to influence subjective well-being among university students. Hewitt and Flett (1991) explained perfectionism to be maladaptive if perfection and performance standards are very high, as well as having a very critical judgment of one's behavior. This perfectionism can be seen when university students compete in academic achievement (Holden, 2020) and desire to achieve high standards (Bahtiyar & Yondem, 2023). As a result, maladaptive perfectionism causes students to suffer academic burnout while continuing their studies at the university level (Q. Wang & Wu, 2022). According to Talib et al. (2019), as many as 71.3% of students like to set high achievement targets without thinking about their own abilities. Students often criticize themselves when they are not meeting the standard, which could cause low well-being in early adulthood (Sekowski et al., 2022).

Thus, in order to further improve the quality of subjective well-being of university students, there is a need for researchers to identify the personality levels of conscientiousness, perfectionism and subjective well-being of university students.

The research questions are as follows,

- 1) What is the level of conscientiousness personality traits among university students?
- 2) What is the level of perfectionism among university students?
- 3) What is the level of subjective well-being among university students?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Subjective well-being of university students

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a form of evaluation that measures individuals' lives cognitively and emotionally (Diener, 1984). Subjective well-being includes components such as happiness, life satisfaction, and positive and negative affect (Diener, 1984). Positive affect describes a person experiencing pleasure, enjoyment,

happiness and joy. Meanwhile, the negative effect describes a person experiencing sadness, fear, anger and so on. In other words, someone who is less stressed and healthy is more likely to appear happy (Diener 2000). Moreover, Lyubormirsky & Lepper (1999) opined that happiness refers to the definition of subjective well-being and that each individual has a different level of well-being.

The level of subjective well-being among university students is a critical matter, as evidenced by studies that have explored the factors that contribute to low levels of well-being. Denovan and Macaskill (2016) stated that first-year university students experience stress during the transition to university and its implications for life satisfaction. A study by Noraznida Husin (2021) found that financial problems put pressure on the lives of university students, while according to Sletta et al. (2019), university students showed the level of subjective well-being is low compared to the level of student well-being 20 years ago. Findings revealed that subjective well-being is linked to self-esteem, social support from classmates, spouse and family members, perception of the curriculum and environment, personal abilities, finances, housing and exam pressure. Moreover, Senocak & Demirkiran (2020) explained that other factors such as stress, social support, social and cultural activities and career choice have an impact on the subjective well-being of students.

2.2 Conscientiousness personality trait

Personality means the form of individual personal characteristics that cover cognitive, emotional, motivational and behavioral aspects. The dimensions of this personality model have been widely studied and proven to have significant implications in various aspects of quality of life and work performance (S Rothmann & E P Coetzer, 2003), the meaning of life (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999). One of the Big-Five dimensions is conscientiousness personality, individuals who are responsible, disciplined, organized, punctual, diligent and have high ambitions (Credé et al. 2016). These individuals also have good time management and self-regulation (Waldeyer et al., 2022) and seem happy and active in academic engagement (Rocha et al., 2022). In addition, they are diligent and strive to achieve goals, whether at school (S. Wang et al., 2019) or at work. (Huo Dan Jiang 2021).

On the other hand, individuals with low conscientiousness would often delay their work and procrastinate (Saman & Wirawan, 2021; Zhang, 2024). A study by Yusliza et al. (2022) explained that these individuals also showed low self-control. On the other hand, Al-Naggar et al. (2015) found a positive relationship between conscientiousness and academic achievement. Thus, students with conscientiousness tend to be diligent, visionary and wise in planning. These characteristics are consistent with a tendency towards compliance with rules (Yusliza et al., 2022). However, the personality trait of extreme conscientiousness can lead to perfectionism, fussiness, over-cautiousness, workaholism, overthinking and over-persistence (Samuel, Riddell, Lynam, Miller, & Widiger, 2012). Thus, the balanced nature of conscientiousness in students can influence their life satisfaction and become a beneficial trait for the subjective well-being of students at the higher education level.

2.3 Perfectionism

Perfectionism often leads to individuals doubting their ability and overthinking about mistakes made (Frost et al., 1990). In this light, individuals with maladaptive perfectionism have excessively high and unrealistic standards for themselves, evaluate themselves in a highly critical way and indirectly form self-harming behavior (Frost et al. 1990). According to Burns (1980), perfectionism is seen as a maladaptive, negative and dangerous trait. However, perfectionism can also be seen as a positive trait and important for success (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). According to Stoeber (2012), perfectionism is characterized as the desire to strive for perfection, set high standards, and always judge based on predetermined criteria. Because perfectionism is a multidimensional construct, perfectionism has both negative and positive elements (Stoeber, 2012).

As such, Findik & Afat (2023) stated that perfectionism affects life satisfaction. In this regard, a previous study by Bradley & Corwyn (2004) explains that life satisfaction is a concept that is as important as the happiness and well-being of an individual's life. According to Abdollahi et al. (2018), perfectionism is associated with depression and anxiety disorders. Chan (2007) linked lower life satisfaction with higher maladaptive perfectionism. This is because aspects such as personal standards, parental expectations and worrying about mistakes are increasingly emphasized in their lives. However, previous studies have focused on the negative effects of perfectionism on well-being and students with adaptive perfectionism show higher life satisfaction and lower mental disorders such as depression (Wang et al. 2009). This statement is in line with the study by Stoeber and Otto (2006); thus, perfectionism is not necessarily negative, as it can be beneficial in some situations.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study design

This study adopted a quantitative approach in the form of survey research using a questionnaire. According to Ghaffar (2003), survey research is a simple and popular method for researchers to examine what is happening.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The study population comprised all undergraduate students at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Due to the large population, it is impossible for researchers to study the entire population because it is time-consuming and costly (Rozmi Ismail, 2016). Thus, the researcher determined the amount of samples according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Subsequently, the number of samples in this study was set to 380 UKM undergraduate students. A simple random sampling technique was used to sample respondents from the target population so that all UKM university students have the opportunity to be selected as study subjects. (Neuman, 2014).

3.3 Research instruments

The researcher used a questionnaire in this study because its use is more practical and easy to administer (Mohd Najib, 2003). This questionnaire was distributed in the form of a 'Google form' and was divided into four parts: Part A, Part B, Part C, and Part D. Table 1 details the item components in each part.

Table 1 Contents of research instruments

Section	Item components	Total item
A	Demographics respondent	3
B	Conscientiousness personality	61
C	Perfectionism	35
D	Subjective well-being	5
Total		104

a) Chernyshenko Conscientiousness Scale (CCS)

Items on students' conscientiousness personality were adapted from Green et al. (2016), which contains 60 items. One item was split into two questions, "I have the highest respect for authorities and assist them whenever I can". Hence, there were 61 items divided into six aspects. The six aspects in the instrument show reliability $\alpha = .83$. Meanwhile, internal consistency for the six aspects is industriousness $\alpha = .87$,

self-control $\alpha = .84$, responsibility $\alpha = .70$, order $\alpha = .88$, traditionalism $\alpha = .74$ and virtue $\alpha = .77$ (Green et al. 2016). Each of these items was measured according to four levels of agreement based on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), somewhat agree (3) and strongly agree (4).

b) Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS)

The items on perfectionism were adapted from (Frost et al. 1990). There were 35 consisting of five aspects. The alpha value for the whole shows $\alpha = .90$. that is, with the internal consistency of personal standards $\alpha = .83$, concern over mistakes $\alpha = .90$, parental criticism $\alpha = .89$, parental expectations $\alpha = .80$, doubt about action $\alpha = .83$, and organization $\alpha = .92$. The Likert scale used range from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree). The researcher used this instrument without modifying any items.

c) Life Satisfaction Scale (Diener 1985)

There were five items on life satisfaction adapted from (Diener 1985). All five items have high reliability, which is $\alpha = .90$. Items involved such as 'The conditions of my life are excellent' and 'I am satisfied with my life'. These items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), slightly agree (3), neutral (4), somewhat agree (5), agree (6) and strongly agree (7).

3.4 Pilot study

A pilot study was carried out to test the validity and reliability of the modified items in the questionnaire in the context of the study. Cresswell (2013) stated that the testing is to measure the validity and reliability of the research instrument as well as facilitate its use if there is a modification in the instrument. According to Mohd Najib (2003), the number of respondents, 15 to 20 people, is sufficient to analyze the validity and reliability of the research instrument. So, in this study, researchers conducted a pilot test involving 43 undergraduate students who are studying at the university level.

3.5 Data analysis

The research findings were analyzed using SPSS software version 27. Descriptive analysis was used to answer level questions. Table 2 is the type of measurement used according to the research question.

Table 2 Data analysis and type of measurement

No	Research Questions	Types of Measurement
1	What is the level of conscientiousness personality traits among university students?	Descriptive analysis (frequency, mean, standard deviation and percentage)
2	What is the level of perfectionism among university students?	Descriptive analysis (frequency, mean, standard deviation and percentage)
3	What is the level of subjective well-being among university students?	Descriptive analysis (frequency, mean, standard deviation and percentage)

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Respondent profile

Demographic data analysis shows a total of 203 (53.4%) female respondents and 177 (46.6%) male respondents. While in terms of race, the majority of the respondents involved are from the Malay race, which is a total of 279

students (73.4%). In terms of faculty background, most students are from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities 49 (12.9%), and the lowest distribution of respondents is from the Faculty of Health Sciences 16 (4.2%). Table 3 is an analysis of the respondents obtained in this research.

Table 3 Profile of respondents

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	177	46.6
	Female	203	53.4
Race	Malay	279	73.4
	Chinese	48	12.6
	India	28	7.4
	Others	25	6.6
Faculty	Economics and Management	29	7.6
	Engineering and the Built Environment	41	10.8
	Islamic Studies	22	8.2
	Education	31	10.3
	Social Sciences and Humanities	49	12.9
	Medicine	31	8.2
	Pharmacy	27	7.1
	Dentistry	25	6.6
	Health Sciences	16	4.2
	Information Science and Technology	18	4.7
	Law	38	10
Total	380	100	100

4.2 The level of conscientiousness personality traits among university students

Descriptive analysis is used to answer research questions, which include three parts, sections B, C and D, in the questionnaire. The results of each dimension show order (mean = 2.56, SD = 0.24), virtue (mean = 2.50, SD = 0.40), traditionalism (mean = 2.52, SD = 0.33), self-control (mean = 2.37, SD = 0.42) responsibility (mean = 2.79, SD = 0.46) and industriousness (mean = 2.48, SD = 0.38) are at a medium low level. The overall conscientiousness personality also showed a moderately low level (mean = 2.54, SD = 0.23).

Table 4 Mean value and standard deviation of conscientiousness personality

Domain	Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
Order	2.56	0.24	Moderately low
Virtue	2.50	0.40	Moderately low
Traditionalism	2.52	0.33	Moderately low
Self-control	2.37	0.42	Moderately low
Responsibility	2.79	0.46	Moderately low
Industriousness	2.48	0.38	Moderately low
Overall conscientiousness personality	2.54	0.23	Moderately low

(Level: Low=1.00-2.00, Moderately low=2.01-3.00, Moderately high= 3.01-4.00, High= 4.01-5.00)

4.3 The level of perfectionism among university students

The findings in this section show that the domains of personal standards (mean=3.20, SD=0.66), parental expectations (mean=3.14, SD=0.62) and organization (mean=3.30, SD=0.66) are at a moderately high level. While dimensions such as concern over mistakes (mean value=2.73, SD=0.60), parental criticism (mean=2.82, SD=0.56) and doubt about action (mean=2.90, SD=0.68), all of which show moderately low levels. The findings indicate that general student perfectionism is at a moderately low level, with a mean score of 3.00 and a standard deviation of 0.40.

Table 5 Mean value and standard deviation of perfectionism level

Domain	Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
Concern over mistakes	2.73	0.60	Moderately low
Personal standards	3.20	0.66	Moderately high
Parental Expectations	3.14	0.62	Moderately high
Parental Criticism	2.82	0.56	Moderately low
Doubt about action	2.90	0.68	Moderately low
Organization	3.30	0.66	Moderately high
Overall student perfectionism	3.00	0.40	Moderately low

(Level: Low=1.00-2.00, Moderately low=2.01-3.00, Moderately high= 3.01-4.00, High= 4.01-5.00)

4.4 Level of subjective well-being among university students

In this study, the researchers used the life satisfaction domain to determine the level of the students' well-being. The results of the study show that the level of subjective well-being of university students is at a high level, with a mean score of 4.22 and a standard deviation of 0.86. The results prove that the students have a relatively high subjective well-being.

Table 6 Mean value and standard deviation of subjective well-being level

Domain	Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
Life satisfaction	4.22	0.86	High
Overall subjective well-being	4.22	0.86	High

(Level: Low=1.00-2.00, Moderately low=2.01-3.00, Moderately high= 3.01-4.00, High= 4.01-5.00)

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 Conscientiousness personality traits among university students

A conscientious personality is important in improving university students' goal-setting. Furthermore, students with high conscientiousness are more likely to focus when dealing with various distractions while studying at the university level. Thus, these students are capable of setting goals, being diligent, organized, disciplined and managing time wisely. In the context of this study, the findings show that students have moderately low conscientiousness personality traits. This finding shows that the majority of university students are still far

behind in the aspects of perseverance, self-control, orderliness, virtue, traditionalism and responsibility. This finding is also supported by Yusliza et al. (2022) who found that the conscientiousness level of university students is at a moderately low level. Low conscientiousness causes university students to tend to be less accountable for their academic achievement (Yusliza et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the findings of this study differ from the study by Saman & Wirawan (2021); individuals with high conscientiousness are less procrastinating, obey rules, are diligent and have good time management. Individuals with high conscientiousness prioritize academic performance and accountability (Peled et al. 2019). The personality trait of high conscientiousness describes a responsible, organized, and goal-oriented person. Furthermore, high conscientiousness can encourage students to remain motivated to excel in academic achievement (Al-Naggar et al., 2015; Sahinidis& Frangos, 2013). On the other hand, low conscientiousness among students needs to be overcome because it has the potential to contribute to problems such as procrastination, delaying work and lack of planning that cause work to pile up and increase pressure as deadlines get closer (Saman & Wirawan, 2021; Zhang, 2024).

5.2 Perfectionism among university students

Perfectionism in the context of university students is an indicator that shows whether perfectionism is adaptive (order) or maladaptive (personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, concern for mistakes and doubts about actions). Based on this finding, university students' perfectionism is at a moderately low level. This shows that the majority of university students do not behave maladaptively. Previous studies have shown that maladaptive perfectionism traits are positively associated with depression (Kawamura et al. 2011; Wei et al. 2004). Maladaptive perfectionism results in students' well-being at a low level and increases the level of depression. This finding is supported by Worst et al. (2024), who found that undergraduate university students have low maladaptive perfectionism. In this regard, low maladaptiveness cause students to have higher adaptive coping skills in stress management (Worst et al., 2024). Thus, low maladaptive perfectionism is linked to students' capability to prioritize their mental and physical well-being.

The results of the study are also supported by Huang et al. (2023). The study found that there is a higher level of adaptive perfectionism compared to maladaptive perfectionism among university students. In this regard, adaptive perfectionism can indirectly encourage students to be motivated and dedicated to their learning. Adaptive perfectionism, such as this organization or order, can help students to produce high quality work and not delay in completing work. This opinion is proven by an earlier study by (Frost et al., 1993) that found a significant relationship between order and personal standards and the frequency of procrastination. In the meantime, Chai et al. (2020) found that adaptive perfectionism is a rational standard, and action has an impact on individual well-being. Overall, the increased level of adaptive perfectionism in the organizational dimension among university students contributes to positive academic achievement and, at the same time, plays an important role in improving overall well-being.

5.3 Subjective well-being among university students

Subjective well-being is an important element in creating a positive and conducive learning environment among university students. This study proves that university students have a high level of subjective well-being; that is, students are aware of the importance of subjective well-being and positivity in their lives as students at the university. The results of the study are supported by Akbar Anwarektino Al Hafiz et al., (2023) which found students' subjective well-being of students is a high level. Studies showed that stress management, social support, family and friend relationships, as well as the latest technology development, can help to increase levels of well-being (Akbar Anwarektino Al Hafiz et al., 2023; Senocak& Demirkiran, 2020; Yubero et al., 2018). Meanwhile, (Delgado-Lobete et al., 2020) found that high well-being is closely related to students who have

high self-esteem. This can see self-esteem motivate university students to achieve goals and engage in activities that bring life satisfaction, thus benefiting their overall well-being.

Meanwhile, the findings of the study are different from the study by Ko Eun et al. (2020) which found that Korean students show moderately low-level subjective well-being. Similarly, Jeong (2019) found that most Korean students experience anxiety over uncertainty about the future. The findings of this study are different because university students have a high level of life satisfaction. In the meantime, Suh & Oishi (2002) explained that cultural differences can affect individual well-being while Sletta et al., (2019), the subjective well-being of university students shows a low level compared to previous university students. In this regard, students may have higher subjective well-being as they have social support from friends, partners and family members and higher self-esteem. On the other hand, low well-being shows that students often worry about their own competency, finances and the cost of living at university, facing examinations, personal abilities, facilities and exam pressure.

VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to identify the level of personality traits of conscientiousness, perfectionism and subjective well-being among university students. The study found that the students involved show a high level of subjective well-being. Meanwhile, the students have moderately low conscientiousness and perfectionism. Therefore, the results of the study reveal aspects that stakeholders need to take care of to improve the conscientiousness among students. This reflects the importance of encouraging university students to have a balance in physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual their well-being to ensure a positive experience in university. In addition, strengthening aspects of perfectionism, especially adaptive perfectionism is crucial to cultivate self-discipline, encourage a healthy lifestyle and increase self-motivation.

Based on the results of this study, further research could be done using qualitative methods to explore more detailed information from the respondents. This study can also be expanded by looking at other personality traits, such as extroversion, openness and neuroticism, in the study of student well-being. Notably, technology development can bring good and bad impacts based on how people accept and use it. Further studies can look at how external factors such as technology affect conscientiousness, perfectionism and well-being in this digital age.

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