WELLBEING OF LOWER INCOME GROUP UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DURING COVID19 PANDEMICS: MULTI-GROUP ANALYSIS OF MALE-FEMALE AND URBAN-RURAL ORIGIN

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted during the COVID 19 pandemic to determine if there is a significant difference in the wellbeing of the lower-income group university students between (1) males and females and (2) urban and rural origin. A quantitative non-experimental comparative study was adopted, and data was collected via an online survey using a convenience sampling technique. A standardized World Health Organization-QOL BREF questionnaire containing 26 items was used for assessing the QOL of the subjects. Partial Least Square – structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) and multigroup analysis (MGA) was utilized to perform the analysis. The respondents comprised of 305 students, 112 from the urban and 193 rural areas. The results suggest there are significant differences between male and female students for physical and psychological health domain. However, the findings did not support for any differences between urban and rural origin towards the four domains of quality of life. The findings help to understand the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on health and wellbeing of university's students which is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 to promote sustainable health to all. Assessing the university students' health and wellbeing during the pandemic is important for assisting policymakers and higher education institutions to work on strategies and action plans for inclusive health care supports to students as the future leaders.

Keywords: *Student Well Being, Quality of Life, Pandemic COVID-19, University Student*

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

1. The present study shows that there are significant differences between male and female students for physical as well as psychological health domain. However, the findings did not support any differences between urban and rural origin towards the four domains of quality of life.
2. The finding helps to understand the effect of the pandemic on health and wellbeing of university's students aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 to promote sustainable health to all.
3. This is important to monitor students' health and wellbeing during the pandemic as it will help policymakers and higher education institutions to improve policy and strategies to support students during this and any future pandemics.

Research Objectives

This study was conducted during the COVID 19 pandemic to determine if there is a significant difference in the wellbeing of the lower-income group university students between (1) males and females and (2) urban and rural origin. This study aims to address the SDG Goals 3 in ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for the university students during pandemic outbreaks. The impact of COVID-19 will be deliberated in alignment with wellbeing and how student wellbeing may be affected by the global pandemic. Recently, the student wellbeing domain has started to embrace core beliefs of the positive psychology approach. The significance of promoting health within the university environment is therefore become a must in order to improved students' wellbeing. This study investigated on socio psychological wellbeing among rural and urban

and low-income level of undergraduate students in Malaysia. It is hoped that the result will provide an insight for coping strategies among the undergraduate students and development of policy among the universities to support the students in this pandemic.

Methodology

A quantitative non-experimental comparative study was adopted, and the data were collected via an online survey using a convenience sampling technique. A standardized World Health Organization-QOL BREF questionnaire containing 26 items was used for assessing the QOL of the subjects. Partial Least Square – structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) and multigroup analysis (MGA) was utilized to perform the analysis. The participants of the study comprised of university students whom the family income was in the lowest category. In Malaysia, this income group is known as B40 which means the bottom of the household economic hierarchy. The respondents comprised of 305 students, 112 from the urban and 193 from the rural areas. The data was run for both the measurement and structural model by using SmartPLS ver 3.3 and the analysis follows the suggestions from Benitez, Henseler, Castillo and Schubert (2020). The data group was generated based on gender, which is male and female, and place of origin, which is urban and rural. As the measurement was build based on the reflective model, the constructs were evaluated for the composite reliability, convergent validity, indicator reliability and discriminant validity.

Results

The composite reliability of greater than 0.707 can be regarded as sensible, as more than 50% of the variance in the construct scores can be explained by the latent variable (Nunally, 1994). The results of the composite reliability ranges from 0.849 to 0.955 for the male group, from 0.820 to 0.945 for the female group, from 0.840 to 0.946 for the urban group and from 0.818 to 0.948, indicating reliable construct scores.

The wellbeing variance for students who come from the urban area is higher than the students with the rural background, with 0.694 and 0.570 respectively. In general, social relationship does not indicate any significant relationship to the wellbeing of all groups.

The results show generally there exist significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between male and female subsamples in terms of physical health and wellbeing relationship, and between psychological factor and wellbeing relationship. The comparison between the urban and rural subsamples suggest no significant difference in any of the relationship. Overall, in terms of significant different, only the relationship between physical health and wellbeing, and psychological health and wellbeing in comparing the male and female students are supported.

Findings

The findings suggest there are significant differences between male and female students for physical as well as psychological health domain. However, the findings did not support

any differences between urban and rural origin towards the four domains of quality of life. The finding helps to understand the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on health and wellbeing of university's students which is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 to promote sustainable health to all. This is important to monitor students' health and wellbeing during the pandemic as it will help policymakers and higher education institutions to improve policy and strategies to support students during this and any future pandemics.

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