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REVIEW ARTICLE

LONELINESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: ITS EFFECT ON THE TREND TOWARDS SMARTPHONE ADDICTION IN EARLY ADULTHOOD WHO WORKS FROM HOME

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ABSTRACT

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, social restriction is one of the policies that the government enforces in suppressing the spread of Covid-19 cases. Thus, social life is drastically reduced. People who usually spend half of their time working at the office feel a significant difference. As a result of preliminary study, since the implementation of WFH, 60% of employees in X Inc. complained of getting lonely because they no longer have a fun social life. This study is a quantitative research that aims to determine the effect of loneliness on smartphone addiction in early adulthood who do the WFH during Covid-19 pandemic at X Inc. Data were collected via online questionnaires in two steps. The first one is pilot study (preliminary study), held in May 2021 (N=30; 56% women; age 20–27 years) and the field study held in June 2021 (N=56; 58% women; age 20–40 years). The data is being analyzed by simple linear regression. The data shows that the effect of loneliness on the tendency of smartphone addiction is 46.1%.

KEYWORDS

Loneliness, Smartphone Addiction, Work From Home (WFH)

1. INTRODUCTION

As one of the organizations in the United States, National Initiative for Cybersecurity Careers and Studies or better known as NICCS stated that during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was an increase in individual mobility that goes online (such as working from home and schooling from home) (NICCS, 2020). In Indonesia, the term Work From Home (WFH) was more interpreted as an appeal from the Indonesian government to carry out work-from-home activities directly instructed by President Joko Widodo (15 March 2020). This happened at the same time as the outbreak of Covid-19 cases in Indonesia. The existence of this appeal is one of the government's steps in reducing the number of Covid-19 positive cases (Ratriani, 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The latest policy that the Indonesian government made to handle the pandemic situation is Community Activity Restrictions (Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat (PPKM)). Since the implementation of PPKM, the community has been socially restricted. Therefore, it gives a significant impact on the social life of individuals (Aziza, 2021). Especially for the individuals who usually spend half of their time working at the office. A survey conducted of 2,000 British workers from 23 July 2020 to 27 July 2020 found that nearly 46% of the total British workers who took the survey experienced loneliness while working remotely (Murray-Nevil, 2020). Perlman and Peplau in define loneliness as a feeling of distress arising from the lack of social relationships in an individual's life (Bucher et al., 2019). Individuals feel lonely because they do not get the desired social life in real life around their environment (Gierveld and Tilburg, 2006). This feeling of loneliness will be more prone to experience in individuals who are at the stage of early adulthood, because one of their

developmental tasks is to establish or have close relationships with other people (Misyaroh, 2016). Individuals who feel socially lonely will seek intimacy needs that cannot be obtained from the actual world and feel that these individuals can interact with others and express themselves better online than offline (Pantic, 2014). Individuals need a positive anticipation to overcome their social loneliness. One of the positive anticipations that can be obtained easily by individuals, as stated by is smartphones (Kwon et al., 2013). The use of smartphones can be an alternative to fill the gap in social loneliness. Feeling comfort that individuals get when using smartphones can lead to a dependence or addiction tendency, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic where the government limits social interactions such as hanging out with friends. Thus, the social life of individuals is mostly spent online (Permana, 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY

Data were collected via online (web-based questionnaires) in two steps. The first one is pilot study (preliminary study), held in May 2021 (N=30; 56% women; age 20–27 years) and the second one is field study, held in June 2021 (N=56; 58% women; age 20–40 years). The data is being analyzed by data processing software IBM SPSS Statistics version 23 and using simple linear regression techniques. There is one measuring instrument for each research variable, A Rasch-Type Loneliness Scale and Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS) (Gierveld and Tilburg, 2006; Kwon et al., 2013).

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study is a quantitative research that aims to determine the effect of loneliness on smartphone addiction in early adulthood who do the WFH during Covid-19 pandemic at X Inc. Respondents of this study are in the

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early adulthood stage. It is a stage where people would work so hard in order to have a successful life. They tend to be egocentric and focus on their future life (Hurlock, 2009). In this study, we found that there was a significant effect between loneliness and smartphone addiction tendencies. The data shows that the effect of loneliness on the tendency of smartphone addiction is 46.1%. This study also found that there was a positive relationship between loneliness and the tendency of smartphone addiction. The more people feel lonely, the more they feel like they want to continuously use their smartphones. This is in line with previous research conducted which also found the effect of loneliness on the tendency of smartphone addiction (Subagio and Hidayati, 2017). Although the effect is only found at 4.2%, it was conducted long before the Covid-19 pandemic emerged. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the loneliness felt by individuals. This assumption is reinforced by the research (Karunathilake, 2020). The results show that the Covid-19 pandemic situation has the potential to make individuals more vulnerable to stress, so that most individuals experience emotional problems such as excessive fear, negative stigma towards people around them, and loneliness.

5. CONCLUSION

Although data limitations preclude strong conclusions, our findings suggest that employees of X Inc. generally feel lonely during WFH. As a result of preliminary study, since the implementation of WFH, 60% of employees in X Inc. complained of getting lonely because they no longer have a fun social life. Hence, they spent a little too much of their time on smartphones since it's the only way for them to get connected to people they used to hang out with. It is important to give time for employees to socialize with coworkers after working hours, discussing about their life and sharing stories such as how they mentally cope with the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

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