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Infleksibilitas Psikologis dan Kesepian pada Dewasa Muda: Peran Harapan sebagai Mediator

Psychological Inflexibility and Loneliness in Young Adults: The Role of Hope as a Mediator

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Abstrak

Masa dewasa awal dalam rentang usia 18-29 tahun merupakan masa paling tidak stabil di sepanjang kehidupan yang mana berbagai perubahan pada relasi romantis dan pekerjaan paling sering terjadi. Masa ini erat kaitannya dengan berbagai isu kesehatan mental, salah satunya kesepian. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran harapan sebagai mediator antara infleksibilitas psikologis dan kesepian pada dewasa muda. Partisipan pada penelitian ini berjumlah 230 partisipan yang berada pada tahap dewasa awal (18-29 tahun). Kesepian diukur menggunakan UCLA Loneliness Scale-6 (ULS-6), infleksibilitas psikologis diukur menggunakan Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II), dan harapan diukur menggunakan The Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (AHS). Analisis mediasi dilakukan dengan menggunakan Hayes Process Macro (Model 4). Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahwa harapan memiliki peran mediasi terhadap hubungan infleksibilitas psikologis dengan kesepian pada dewasa muda. Implikasi dari penelitian ini, yaitu dapat menjadi pertimbangan pemilihan intervensi yang berfokus meningkatkan fleksibilitas psikologis dan tingkat harapan ketika menangani isu kesepian pada dewasa muda.

Kata Kunci: Kesepian; Infleksibilitas Psikologis; Harapan.

Abstract

Young adulthood (18-29 years of age) is the most unstable period of the life span when changes in intimate relationships and work are the common issues. This period is closely related to various mental health problems, such as loneliness. This study aims to determine the role of hope as a mediator between psychological inflexibility and loneliness in young adults. Research participants were 230 participants who were in the young adulthood stage (18-29 years of age). Loneliness was measured using UCLA Loneliness Scale-6 (ULS-6), psychological inflexibility was measured using Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II), and hope was measured using The Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (AHS). Mediation analysis was done using Hayes PROCESS MACRO (Model 4). The results of the analysis show that hope has a mediating role in the relationship between psychological inflexibility and loneliness in young adults. The implication of this research is that it can be used as a consideration for selecting interventions that focus on increasing psychological flexibility and hope when dealing with loneliness in young adults.

Keywords: Loneliness; Psychological Inflexibility; Expectations.

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INTRODUCTION

Early adulthood, in the age range of 18-29 years is a time when individuals are going through the transition from late adolescence to adulthood. During this time, individuals are in the most unstable period of life during which changes in romantic relationships and work occur most often. This period is also closely related to various mental health issues such as anxiety, depression (Arnett, 2014), and loneliness which have the highest prevalence in late adolescence to middle adulthood (Qualter et al., 2015).

In trying to adjust to the various instabilities and changes that occur, individuals may show mixed responses. In the process, the emergence of negative thoughts and feelings that are uncomfortable is a natural response experienced by everyone. This is also stated by Hayes-Skelton and Eustis (2020), when the situation is perceived to lead an uncomfortable experience, it is very natural that individuals will avoid the situation. However, individuals are expected not to continuously avoid uncomfortable situations, because when the behavior of avoiding uncomfortable situations is done rigidly and continuously, it will have a negative impact on the individual. The concept of avoiding uncomfortable situations is rigidly and constantly described by Hayes-Skelton and Eustis (2020) as experiential avoidance. Hayes, Strosahl and Wilson (2012) state that experiential avoidance is the most common response pattern that contributes to psychological inflexibility, as well as contributing to exacerbating non-adaptive behavior when individuals are in difficult circumstances.

Psychological inflexibility is an individual's unwillingness to experience thoughts, feelings, and sensations within oneself, as well as rigidity of the individual's thoughts and behavior patterns as a form of avoiding unwanted emotional experiences (Hayes, et al., 1996; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2012). The individual evaluates the events that occur negatively and seeks to resist, control and shy away from those events. Research conducted by Chawla & Ostafin (2007) shows that psychological inflexibility also hinders the process of developing social relations. This is also supported by Shi et al. (2016) who show that experiential avoidance which is included in psychological inflexibility is related to loneliness. For some individuals, loneliness can have a negative impact on physical health and mental health, some of which are, depression, risk of cardiovascular disease, adjustment, and anxiety (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010; Quan, et al., 2014; Zawadzki, Graham & Gerin, 2013). When individuals are not psychologically flexible, it distracts them from engaging fully in the present and with those around them, which contributes to loneliness.

In addition, research conducted by Sariçalı, Güler and Anandavalli (2021) shows that there is a significant effect between psychological inflexibility and expectations. It is further explained that psychological inflexibility will lead to limited alternative behavioral options that are usually used by individuals, which is important for expectations. When individuals are limited in alternative behavioral options in achieving goals, individuals will have difficulty finding ways and cultivating confidence

to be able to achieve goals. Hope itself is a thought process consisting of individual desires and beliefs towards achieving a goal (Snyder, et al., 1991). Snyder, Rand and Sigmon (2002) emphasize the thought process in expectancy theory. They explain that positive emotions arise when individuals have a perception of success in pursuing goals. Conversely, negative emotions are the result when individuals perceive efforts to achieve goals as failing.

As for Snyder, Rand and Sigmon (2002) explain that the perception of failure in pursuing goals is related to agency and or pathway disabilities as two important things in expectations. In achieving its goals in the context of this study, young adult individuals are expected to be able to go through unstable periods and be connected to their environment, individuals must be able to see that they are able to find ways or ways to achieve these goals (pathway thinking). While agency thinking explains the individual's perception of the capacity, he has in walking the route that has been thought out (pathway) to achieve the goal. The state of individual expectations for achieving connected goals in social relationships is explained to be related to feelings of loneliness (Sympson, 1999). When individuals have high levels of expectation, expectancy theory explains that individuals will tend to build relationships with others (Snyder, et al., 1997) and have perceptions of social support (Snyder, 1995; Snyder, 2002) where the perception is related to the emergence or absence of feelings of loneliness in individuals.

Despite numerous studies supporting the mechanisms of psychological inflexibility, loneliness and hopelessness, there is no specific theoretical model that can explain the mechanisms of these three variables. However, based on the model of social-cognition theory described by Cacioppo and Hawkley (2009), individuals who feel lonely will go through a phase where individuals perceive themselves as socially isolated. In the process of social interaction, the experiences experienced are very likely to vary, namely positive and negative experiences. Negative experiences are associated with the emergence of perceptions that individuals are socially isolated. When experiencing negative experiences, individuals tend to develop awareness of social threats. Individuals are more likely to develop negative expectations and remember negative social interaction events, which are also related to behaviors that will be demonstrated as a form of confirmation process.

In this process, when the individual chooses to avoid negative experiences and feelings that are felt. Then it is done rigidly and continuously (psychological inflexibility). The impact that will arise is that negative feelings become more intense, namely feelings of social isolation. When individuals choose to avoid negative experiences and feelings (psychological inflexibility), it is assumed that it will also affect how individuals perceive their development in relation to their goals. Individuals perceive that they do not develop in achieving their goals, which in the context of this study is connected to others. This contributes to the low confidence that individuals can find a way to achieve goals (*pathway thinking*) and the low confidence that

individuals are able to achieve goals through their path (agency thinking). Low pathway and agency thinking (expectations) related to individual anxiety about the process of social interaction will affect social competence and individual perceptions of social support, which perceptions are related to the emergence of feelings of loneliness in individuals.

The study by Castro, Pereira, and Ferreira (2021) which focused on the relationship between psychological inflexibility and the experience of loneliness, revealed that individuals who have higher levels of psychological inflexibility will be followed by a higher sense of loneliness. However, as far as researchers know, not many studies have examined the two variables, as well as the variables that may mediate the relationship. In the researcher's view, the role of expectations as a relevant mediator is used in understanding the relationship of psychological inflexibility and loneliness in young adults. Hope is one of the important constructs in facilitating individual adaptation and coping when facing changes and difficulties in life (Sarıçalı, Güler, & Anandavalli, 2021). Therefore, more studies are needed that explain the role of expectations.

Umphrey and Sherblom (2014) explain that expectations predict better social relations skills. Individuals who have lower levels of expectation will have more difficulty building relationships with others. Low social relationship ability predicts feelings of loneliness (Fauziyyah & Ampuni, 2018). Low levels of expectation are also associated with individual psychological inflexibility. Hayes, Strosahl and Wilson (2012) explain that when individuals choose to avoid, suppress or eliminate the experience of thoughts and emotions, it will have an impact on increasingly intense thoughts and emotions. This will cause the individual to feel overwhelmed and weaken the individual's ability to be in the present moment (in the present moment). When individuals are unable to be present in the present, it will contribute to the level of expectation, where individuals have difficulty finding alternative ways to solve problems (pathway) and find motivation to lead to solutions (agency) (Ender, et al., 2019).

Based on literature review, it becomes important to look at the factors of psychological inflexibility in helping young adult individuals with loneliness issues, as well as more specific operational definitions of expectations to get a more accurate picture of the relationship of expectations to the other two variables. A mediating analysis is needed to see if hope can explain the link between psychological inflexibility and loneliness in young adults. The study's hypotheses are: 1) There is a positive association between psychological inflexibility and loneliness in young adults; 2) There is a role for hope in mediating the relationship between psychological inflexibility and loneliness. The research model can be seen in Figure 1.

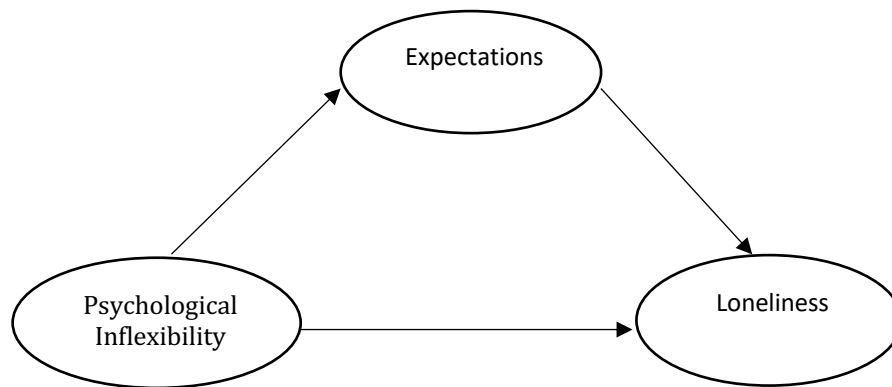


Figure 1. Mediation Model (Model 4) Expectations as a Mediator

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is correlational quantitative research. Participants in this study were individuals who were in the young adult age stage (18-29 years). The number of participants in this study amounted to 230. The data collection method uses online surveys by utilizing google forms. The measuring instruments used in this study are adaptation measurement tools in Indonesian, namely the UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS-6), Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II), and The Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (AHS).

Measurement of loneliness using the UCLA Loneliness Scale-3 has been developed by Russell (1996). Initially, UCLA Loneliness Scale-3 amounted to 20 items, then Hudiyana, et al. (2022) adapted and carried out measurement invariance on this measuring instrument. The results were obtained 6 items UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS-6) which is precisely used to measure loneliness in various cultures. ULS-6 consists of six statements and each statement consists of four answer choices, namely "Never", "Rarely", "Sometimes", "Often". The minimum value of the ULS-6 analyzer is 0 and the maximum value of the ULS-6 analyzer is 24, with the higher the score indicating a high sense of loneliness. Measuring instruments have been used in various countries and have been validated for use by adolescents to the elderly. The reliability coefficient of ULS-6 measuring instrument in this study is $\alpha = 0.82$.

Measurement of psychological inflexibility using the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II) developed by Bond, Hayes, et al. (2011) and has been translated into Indonesian by Radyani, Indra, & Oriza (2022). AAQ-II consists of seven statements and each statement consists of seven answer choices, namely "Never happens", "Very rare", "Rare", "Happens sometimes", "Happens often", "Almost always happens", "Always happens". The minimum value of the AAQ-II analyzer is 0 and the maximum value of the AAQ-II analyzer is 49. The measuring instruments have been validated by experts and through comprehension tests. The reliability coefficient of AAQ-II measuring instruments in this study is $\alpha = 0.87$.

Expectation measurement using The Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (AHS) developed by Snyder, et al. (1991) and adapted in a version that suits Indonesian society by Novrianto and Menaldi (2022). The AHS consists of 12 statements and each statement consists of eight answer choices, namely "Highly erroneous", "Largely erroneous", "Quite erroneous", "Somewhat erroneous", "Somewhat appropriate", "Quite appropriate", "Mostly appropriate", "Highly appropriate". The minimum value of the AHS analyzer is 0 and the maximum value of the AHS analyzer is 64. This is because there are four statements that are not included in the score calculation. The measuring instrument has gone through a convergent validity test. The reliability coefficient of the AHS measuring instrument in this study is $\alpha = 0.87$.

A mediation analysis examining the role of expectation levels as a mediator variable in the association between psychological inflexibility and loneliness in young adults was tested using IBM SPSS Statistics' version 25 Hayes PROCESS Macro. The model used is model 4. To determine the significance of the model, researchers use percentile bootstrap confidence interval with the criterion if the confidence interval does not pass 0, meaning the model is significant. Bootstrap used by 5000. This research has passed the research ethics review reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology; University of Indonesia based on the Certificate of Passing the Research Ethics Review with number 233/FPsi.Ethics Committee/PDP.04.00/2023.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive data in this study.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Data

Category	N	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Man	43	18.7%
Woman	187	81.3%
Current activity		
Student	117	50.9%
Work	70	30.4%
Student and work	24	10.4%
Not workers and not students	19	8.3%
Marital Status		
Single	214	93%
Marry	16	7%
Problem areas		
Economic and employment area	63	27.4%
Future areas	56	24.3%
Area of intrapersonal relationships	26	11.3%
Areas of interpersonal relationships	24	10.4%
Areas of health and physical development	17	7.4%
Areas of circumstances and relationships in the family	14	6.1%
Activity area at leisure	13	5.7%
Area of courtship and marriage	9	3.9%
	4	1.7%

Areas of adjustment to academic tasks	2	0.9%
Education area	2	0.9%
Areas of religion, values, and morals		

In this study, 230 participants were found to be in the developmental stages of young adulthood (18-29 years) with an average age of 22 years ($M = 22, 29$; $SD = 2.71$). The percentage of female participants was more (81.3%) compared to men, the relationship status was the most single (93%), and with the activities being carried out by participants dominated by students (50.9%), work (30.4%), students work (10.4%). Then, demographic data also described the problem areas being experienced by participants dominated by problems in the economic and work areas (27.4%), future areas (24.3%), intrapersonal relationship areas (11.3%) and interpersonal relationship areas (10.4%). The descriptive statistical results of each variable are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Data from Psychological Inflexibility, Hope, and Loneliness

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Psychological Inflexibility	7	49	32,69	8,75
Expectations	17	64	44,43	9,55
Loneliness	6	24	13,92	4,54

Table 3. Coefficients of the Expectation Mediation Model in the Relationship of Psychological Inflexibility with Loneliness

Anteseden	Consequent											
	M (H)						Y (KS)					
	Koef	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	Koef	SE	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
X (PI)	-0,40	0,06	-6,04	0,00	-0,53	-0,27	0,21	0,03	6,99	0,00	0,15	0,27
M (H)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0,13	0,02	-4,86	0,00	-0,18	-0,08
	$R^2 = 0,13$						$R^2 = 0,33$					

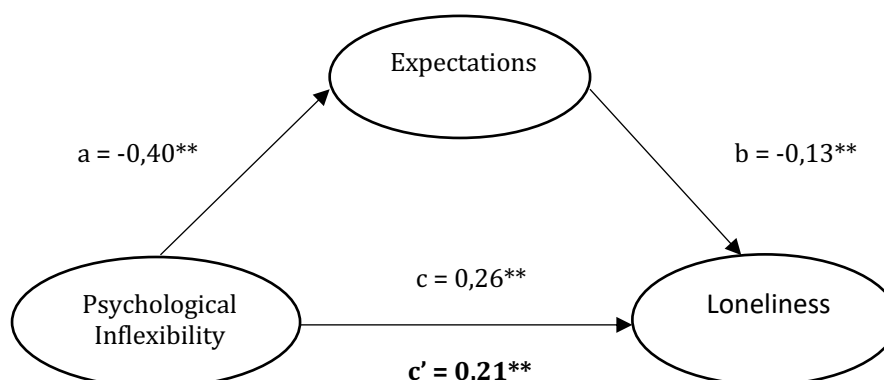


Figure 2. Mediation Model Coefficient

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$. Bolded writing shows the relationship of Psychological Inflexibility with Loneliness after Hope interceded.

Researchers tested the hypothesis using Hayes Process Macro mediated regression analysis (Model 4). The results of the analysis can be seen in table 3. The results of the c' pathway analysis showed that there was a significant positive association between psychological inflexibility and loneliness in young adults ($b = 0.21$, 95% CI [0.15; 0.27]), meaning psychological inflexibility could predict 33% variance of loneliness levels in young adults. Then, pathway a showed that there was a significant negative association between psychological inflexibility and expectancy levels in young adults ($b = -0.40$, 95% CI [-0.53; -0.27]). This explains that psychological inflexibility can predict the level of expectation in young adult individuals. Furthermore, the results of pathway b analysis showed that there was a significant negative association between expectancy levels and loneliness levels in young adult individuals ($b = -0.13$, 95% CI [-0.18; -0.08]). This explains that expectancy levels can predict levels of loneliness in young adults. Then, to prove whether there is a mediating effect of expectation levels on the relationship between psychological inflexibility and loneliness levels in young adults, CI values that do not include zero were obtained (CI = 0.02; 0.08, indirect effect = 0.0548). It follows then that the relationship between psychological inflexibility and loneliness is mediated by hope.

The variable descriptive data showed that the average of the total psychological inflexibility scores in participants was 32.69. This may indicate that participants are at clinically relevant stress levels (cut-off score 24-28) (Bond, et al., 2011). Meanwhile, it can be related to problem areas as a source of stress dominated by problems in the economic and work areas, future areas, intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. The results showed several important things. First, that young adult individuals who are not psychologically flexible will have lower levels of expectations, as indicated by the negative and significant relationship between the two variables. The role of psychological inflexibility as an ineffective form of adaptation when the individual faces a source of stress will affect how the individual's beliefs can find a way to his goal and become motivated to use that method (hope).

Second, the study showed that lower levels of expectation predict loneliness in young adults. In line with the explanation of Snyder, et al. (1997) and Sympson (1999) that the level of expectation is related to social competence and loneliness in individuals. When individuals can develop expectations, individuals are seen as capable of developing the ability to see from the perspective of others. Whereas, when individuals do not have the belief that they can find a way to a goal and become motivated to use that method (hope), they are less likely to engage in social relationships with those around them, which is associated with perceptions of social isolation and loneliness.

Third, the study also showed that higher levels of psychological inflexibility predict loneliness in young adults. Fourth, this study has further examined the mechanism of the relationship between psychological inflexibility and loneliness through the role of expectations as mediators. In line with the model of social-

cognition theory described by Cacioppo and Hawkey (2009), the results suggest that expectations have a mediating role to the association of psychological inflexibility with loneliness in young adults. That is, when individuals are not psychologically flexible, that is, tend to avoid uncomfortable emotions and experiences rigidly and continuously, individuals will perceive that they are not developing in achieving their goals, in the context of this study relates to others. This perception contributes to the low confidence that individuals can find a way to achieve goals (pathway thinking) and the low confidence that individuals are able to achieve goals through their paths (agency thinking). Low pathway and agency thinking (expectations) related to individual anxiety about the process of social interaction will affect social competence and individual perceptions of social support. Thus, the impact felt by young adult individuals is loneliness.

In practice, interventions that can be pursued primarily when it comes to loneliness focus on aspects of individual psychological flexibility and expectations. The Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) approach can be a reference for developing psychological flexibility in individuals. Then, equip individuals with social relationship skills, so that individuals can develop confidence that individuals are able to find ways to achieve goals and are motivated to use those methods. This is also supported by several studies that explain that the concepts of hope and loneliness can be sought for the better through the intervention process (Caldwell, et al., 2010; Davidson, Feldman, & Margalit, 2012).

This research certainly has limitations. Descriptive data show that in individuals aged 18-29 years with a predominance of participant activities as students and work, the problem area is dominated by economic, work, and future areas. However, researchers have not explored more about how participants cope with stress, so researchers do not clearly know the form of participants' responses to stress associated with psychological inflexibility. In addition, the age of participants in the study was still dominated by certain age groups, so the data obtained was not even in age representation. Therefore, in future studies, it is advisable to explore more about how individuals cope with stress, individual perceptions of the future, and can consider a balanced amount of demographic data on the age of participants.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to explaining the effect of psychological inflexibility on loneliness in young adults. The results found that psychological inflexibility had a positive and significant association with loneliness. Also, this study also explains the effect of hope on loneliness. The results found that hope had a negative and significant association with loneliness. As for related to the role of expectations as a mediator variable, it was found that the appearance of loneliness in young adults is influenced by psychological inflexibility through the level of expectation. When young adults are psychologically inflexible, it lowers expectations and leads to loneliness.

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