

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN MANAGING STRESS AMONG GENERATION Z IN BANDUNG

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of social support in managing stress among Generation Z in Bandung. Using a quantitative approach, the research involved 300 respondents aged between 12 and 27 years. Data were collected through a questionnaire measuring social support and stress levels. The results indicate that social support, particularly emotional support from family and close friends, as well as informational support from the internet and social media, significantly impacts stress reduction. Correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between social support and stress levels ($r = -0.45, p < 0.01$), while regression analysis showed that social support significantly affects stress levels ($\beta = -0.35, p < 0.01$). Stress levels also varied by age group, with the 12-17 age group reporting higher stress levels. The study suggests enhancing family support, utilizing technology for social support, and developing support programs in schools and universities as measures to improve mental well-being among Generation Z.

Keywords: Social Support, Stress, Generation Z, Mental Well-being

1. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, often referred to as Gen Z or iGeneration, encompasses those born after the Millennial generation, generally between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. They have grown up in a digital era where information technology and social media are integral to daily life. Generation Z is characterized by a high adaptability to technology, strong multitasking skills, and a tendency to be more independent and open to diversity. According to Twenge (2017), Generation Z has a pragmatic and realistic outlook on life, influenced by witnessing significant global events such as economic crises and climate change. They are also more attuned to social and environmental issues and possess a heightened awareness of mental health (Schroth, 2019).

In terms of psychological and social development, social support plays a crucial role for Generation Z. Social support can come from family, friends, colleagues, as well as online and offline communities. According to House (1983), social support includes four main types: emotional support, informational support, instrumental support, and appraisal support. Emotional support involves empathy, affection, and attention from close ones. Informational support includes advice, guidance, or useful information, while instrumental support covers tangible help, such as financial or practical assistance. Appraisal support involves positive validation or feedback on one's abilities and efforts.

For Generation Z, social support is not only vital for their emotional and mental well-being but also impacts their ability to face life's challenges, manage stress, and achieve personal and professional goals. Cohen & Wills (1985) suggest that social support can act as a buffer against the negative effects of stress, helping individuals feel safer, valued, and better equipped to handle difficulties. In a fast-paced and often stressful world, having a strong social support network is crucial for Generation Z.

High Stress Levels Among Generation Z in Major Cities, Including Bandung. Although technology has facilitated access to information and communication, it has also brought negative impacts, including increased stress levels among Generation Z. In major cities like Bandung, Generation Z faces various pressures, including academic, professional, social, and personal. According to the American Psychological Association (2018), Generation Z reports higher stress levels compared to other generations, with sources of stress ranging from academic demands, job market competition, to pressure to present a perfect image on social media.

Moreover, social and economic issues in major cities, such as traffic congestion, pollution, and high living costs, add to the stress burden for Generation Z (Simamora, 2019). They are also more vulnerable to mental health issues like anxiety and depression, often triggered by social isolation, cyberbullying, and unrealistic expectations. According to Piko (2001), adequate social support can mitigate the negative impacts of stress and enhance mental well-being. In this context, research on the role of social support in managing stress among Generation Z in Bandung is highly relevant. Understanding how social support can help reduce stress and improve mental well-being can lead to more effective interventions to support Generation Z in navigating the challenges of the modern era.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research approach used in this study is a quantitative approach. This method was chosen because it allows the researcher to numerically measure the involved variables and statistically analyze the relationships between these variables. By using this approach, the researcher can identify significant patterns and trends in the collected data, leading to objective and generalizable findings.

The population for this study consists of Generation Z in Bandung. In this context, Generation Z is defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, who are transitioning from adolescence to early adulthood. They face unique challenges related to technological advancements, social changes, and economic dynamics. Bandung was selected as the research location due to its status as a major city in Indonesia with a sizable and diverse Generation Z population.

The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was chosen to ensure that the sample accurately represents the characteristics and dynamics of Generation Z in Bandung (Wu Suen et al., 2014). The inclusion criteria for the sample are individuals aged between 12 and 27 years who reside in Bandung. The sample size must be sufficiently large to ensure the validity and reliability of the research results.

The primary instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was chosen because it allows for the collection of data from a large number of respondents in a relatively short time. The questionnaire consists of several sections:

1. **Demographic Section:** Collects basic information about respondents, such as age, gender, educational level, and employment status.
2. **Stress Scale:** Measures the level of stress experienced by respondents using a standardized scale, such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS).

3. **Social Support Scale:** Assesses respondents' perceptions of the social support they receive, using a relevant scale such as the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS).
4. **Open-Ended Questions:** Provides space for respondents to give more in-depth responses about their experiences with stress and social support.

The steps in data collection are as follows:

1. **Preparation:** Develop and pilot-test the questionnaire to ensure the clarity and validity of the questions.
2. **Orientation:** Inform potential respondents about the research objectives through various communication channels, such as social media, community groups, and educational institutions.
3. **Questionnaire Distribution:** Distribute the questionnaire both online and offline to respondents who meet the inclusion criteria. Respondents are given ample time to complete the questionnaire thoroughly and honestly.
4. **Collection:** Gather the completed questionnaires and ensure that all necessary data has been collected properly.
5. **Data Verification:** Check the completeness and consistency of the collected data before beginning the analysis.

The data analysis methods used in this study include:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** Employed to describe the demographic characteristics of respondents and the distribution of key variables, such as stress levels and social support.
2. **Reliability and Validity Testing:** Utilizes Cronbach's Alpha to assess the reliability of the scales used and factor analysis to test construct validity.
3. **Correlation Analysis:** Uses Pearson's correlation coefficient to identify the relationship between social support levels and stress levels.
4. **Regression Analysis:** Employs linear regression analysis to test the effect of social support on stress levels, controlling for relevant demographic variables.
5. **Analysis of Variance (ANOVA):** Used to compare stress levels among different demographic groups (e.g., based on age, gender, educational level).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involves 300 respondents from Generation Z in Bandung, selected using purposive sampling with inclusion criteria of ages 12 to 27 years. Of these, 160 respondents are female (53.3%) and 140 are male (46.7%). The respondents' educational levels vary: 40% are in secondary education (middle/high school), 50% are in higher education (undergraduate/associate degree), and 10% have completed advanced education (master's/doctoral degrees).

By age, the respondents are divided into three groups: 12-17 years (35%), 18-22 years (45%), and 23-27 years (20%). Most respondents reside in urban areas of Bandung, while the remainder live in suburban areas. Employment status also varies, with 60% being students, 30% working full-time or part-time, and 10% not working or actively seeking employment.

Data analysis categorizes the social support received by Generation Z in Bandung into four main types: emotional support, informational support, instrumental support, and appraisal support.

A. Emotional Support

The majority of respondents reported receiving emotional support primarily from family and close friends. Specifically, 70% of respondents stated that their family consistently provides the emotional support they need, such as listening to their concerns and offering encouragement. Close friends are also a significant source of emotional support for 60% of respondents.

Emotional support is a crucial form of social support in managing stress, particularly for Generation Z in Bandung. The research findings indicate that the emotional support received by respondents comes mainly from two primary sources: family and close friends. About 70% of respondents reported receiving substantial emotional support from their families. This support includes various forms of emotional assistance, such as listening to complaints, providing advice, and offering motivation and encouragement in dealing with life challenges (Cheng et al., 2023). As the first and closest social unit, family plays a key role in providing a sense of security and emotional stability.

Family is often the first-place individuals turn to for support when facing stress or personal issues. For Generation Z, who frequently experience high academic and social pressures, emotional support from family is crucial for helping them feel more connected and supported. This support creates an environment conducive to expressing feelings and problems without feeling pressured or judged.

In addition to family, close friends are a significant source of emotional support for 60% of respondents. Close friends provide similar forms of support, such as listening, offering empathy, and providing perspectives that family members may not consider. In many cases, close friends can offer support that is more tailored to the specific situations faced by Generation Z, particularly regarding social issues and daily experiences that may not be fully understood by family members. Friends often serve as a place to share experiences and feelings that are difficult to express to family. They offer non-judgmental support and often share similar experiences, which helps to create strong emotional bonds. This support is essential in helping individuals feel more accepted and less isolated.

The combination of emotional support from family and close friends helps Generation Z feel more connected and supported in facing various stresses and challenges. Emotional support provides the confidence and peace of mind needed to address issues, enhancing individuals' ability to cope with stress more effectively. The presence of caring family members and reliable friends plays a crucial role in building emotional resilience. When individuals feel supported, they are more likely to manage their emotions and be better prepared to face existing pressures. Therefore, emotional support not only helps alleviate stress but also contributes to overall mental well-being.

Overall, these findings suggest that emotional support from family and close friends is a vital aspect of mental well-being for Generation Z. Consistent and attentive support from both sources serves as an effective buffer against stress, helping individuals feel more capable and connected in navigating their life challenges.

B. Informational Support

The primary sources of informational support for respondents are the internet and social media. Approximately 80% of respondents use the internet to seek information for academic, professional, and daily life needs. Additionally, teachers and lecturers are also important sources of information for 50% of respondents. Informational support involves providing relevant and useful information to help individuals address problems and meet their needs. In the context of Generation Z in Bandung, the study finds that the main sources of informational support come from two key areas: the internet and social media, as well as teachers and lecturers.

Around 80% of respondents reported using the internet and social media as their primary sources of informational support. The internet, as a vast platform, offers unlimited access to various types of information needed in daily life. Respondents use the internet to find academic materials, research guides, and academic references. Additionally, the internet is utilized to gather information related to job opportunities, career tips, and professional development.

Social media, on the other hand, serves as a more immediate and often more personalized source of information. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn provide access to articles, news, and discussions that help respondents stay informed about the latest trends, industry developments, and social issues. Social media also facilitates interaction with various online communities that offer support and advice based on their experiences.

The use of the internet and social media for informational support reflects Generation Z's strong connection with digital technology. They tend to seek information independently and use digital resources to meet their needs efficiently. Informational support from these sources helps them feel more skilled and prepared to face daily challenges.

In addition to the internet and social media, teachers and lecturers play a crucial role as sources of information for 50% of respondents. In academic contexts, teachers and lecturers provide valuable knowledge and guidance. They offer relevant information on course material, research methods, and academic skills necessary for achieving educational goals. Teachers and lecturers not only impart academic knowledge but also provide advice and mentorship that can influence respondents' professional and personal development. They serve as mentors who assist students in understanding complex concepts, planning their studies, and mapping out future careers. Often, they also provide constructive feedback and opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities that expand knowledge and skills.

Significance of informational support in managing stress can be seen in how effective informational support plays a vital role in helping Generation Z manage various forms of stress. By accessing relevant information, they can make better decisions, feel more informed, and reduce uncertainty that can lead to stress. Accurate and up-to-date information provides a sense of control and confidence, aiding them in facing challenges more prepared and effectively.

The internet and social media offer quick and easy access to needed information, while teachers and lecturers provide more personalized and in-depth guidance. The combination of these sources creates a comprehensive informational support network that helps Generation Z feel more connected and prepared to face various challenges.

Overall, informational support from the internet, social media, teachers, and lecturers is a crucial component in stress management strategies for Generation Z. Access

to accurate and relevant information helps them feel more competent and confident in managing different aspects of life, contributing to their mental well-being and ability to cope with stress effectively.

C. Instrumental Support

Instrumental support, such as financial and practical assistance, primarily comes from family. About 65% of respondents reported that their families often provide financial help, while 45% receive practical assistance, such as help with household chores or work tasks.

Instrumental support refers to a form of social support that involves direct assistance in practical or financial forms to help individuals face specific challenges or needs. In the context of Generation Z in Bandung, this study identifies that the most significant instrumental support mainly comes from family. This support includes two main aspects: financial help and practical assistance.

Approximately 65% of respondents reported receiving financial support from their families. This financial assistance may include allowances, help with education costs, or support for daily needs. In many cases, families provide financial support as a way to reduce the economic burden faced by Generation Z, allowing them to focus on studies, work, or other activities without being stressed by financial issues.

Financial assistance from family is crucial, especially for young people who are often in transition from education to the workforce. This support helps them manage living expenses, pay for education, and meet other basic needs. With this support, respondents can feel more financially secure and have more resources to face the challenges they encounter.

In addition to financial help, 45% of respondents also reported receiving practical support from their families. Practical support includes various forms of direct assistance that help respondents' complete daily tasks or specific jobs. Examples include help with household chores, assistance with housework, or support in completing academic or work-related projects. Practical support from family acts as a very tangible and direct form of support. This can include tasks like helping with house cleaning, preparing meals, or providing guidance on academic assignments. This support reduces the workload and stress experienced by respondents, allowing them to focus more on their primary activities and alleviate pressure from additional responsibilities.

Instrumental support provided by families plays an important role in reducing the stress levels experienced by Generation Z. Financial and practical assistance helps lessen the burden from economic issues or daily responsibilities, providing the stability and security needed to handle stress more effectively. Stable financial assistance allows respondents to manage living and educational costs without excessive financial stress. Meanwhile, practical support helps reduce the workload and responsibilities that could lead to additional stress. With this instrumental support, respondents can feel more supported and capable of handling daily challenges more effectively.

Overall, instrumental support from family is a crucial component of the social support network for Generation Z. This support helps them address various practical and financial issues, which in turn contributes to their mental well-being and their ability to manage stress better. This support not only provides direct help but also creates a sense of connection and support that enhances overall quality of life.

D. Appraisal Support

Peer and social media support are the primary sources of evaluative support for respondents. About 55% of respondents reported frequently receiving positive feedback and validation from their peers, both directly and through social media.

Evaluative support is a form of social support that focuses on providing feedback, validation, and recognition of an individual's achievements or behaviors. In the context of Generation Z in Bandung, this study identifies that peers and social media are the main sources of evaluative support for respondents. This type of support plays a crucial role in building self-confidence and emotional well-being among Generation Z.

Approximately 55% of respondents reported receiving positive feedback and validation from their friends, both directly and via social media. Peers provide evaluative support in various ways, including direct praise, verbal encouragement, and positive comments about individual achievements or efforts. In daily interactions, friends often offer moral support and recognition needed to boost self-confidence and motivation. Evaluative support from peers is vital because they are often in a position to give relevant feedback based on similar experiences. Friends can provide perspectives that are closer and more understanding of the challenges and achievements faced by individuals. Validation from peers not only acknowledges efforts and accomplishments but also fosters a strong sense of social connection and support.

Social media also plays a significant role as a source of evaluative support. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook offer channels for Generation Z to receive positive feedback and validation from their social networks (Lestari, 2018). Through social media, respondents can share their achievements, photos, or content showcasing their work or activities, and receive comments, likes, and support from their friends and followers.

Evaluative support on social media is often seen in the form of positive comments, likes, and other forms of positive interaction. Validation through social media can provide a significant boost to an individual's self-confidence and motivation. Social media allows respondents to expand their evaluative support network by receiving feedback not only from close friends but also from a broader community.

Significance of evaluative support in managing stress can be seen as evaluative support received from peers and social media has a significant impact on emotional well-being and Generation Z's ability to manage stress. Positive feedback and validation help strengthen self-confidence and self-esteem, which in turn can reduce feelings of stress and insecurity. When individuals feel recognized and valued by those around them, they are better able to face pressures and challenges with a more positive attitude. Validation from peers and social media also serves as a form of recognition that validates individual efforts and achievements, providing additional motivation to continue striving and growing. The sense of acceptance and appreciation gained through evaluative support enhances social connectedness, which is a crucial factor in managing stress and improving mental well-being.

Overall, evaluative support from peers and social media is a key component of the social support network for Generation Z. This support not only boosts self-confidence and motivation but also contributes to better stress management and a more positive emotional state. Consistent and positive evaluative support helps build emotional resilience and mitigates the negative impacts of stress in daily life.

Pearson correlation analysis reveals a significant negative relationship between social support and stress levels ($r = -0.45$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that higher social support is associated with lower stress levels among respondents. Further, linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the impact of social support on stress levels while controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, and education level. The regression results show that social support significantly affects stress levels ($\beta = -0.35$, $p < 0.01$). Emotional support and informational support have the strongest effects on reducing stress, with $\beta = -0.30$ ($p < 0.01$) and $\beta = -0.25$ ($p < 0.05$), respectively.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also used to compare stress levels among different demographic groups. ANOVA results show no significant difference in stress levels based on gender and education level ($F = 1.25$, $p > 0.05$). However, there is a significant difference in stress levels based on age groups ($F = 3.75$, $p < 0.05$), with the 12-17 age group reporting higher stress levels compared to other age groups.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that social support plays a crucial role in reducing stress among Generation Z in Bandung. Emotional support from family and close friends, as well as informational support from the internet and social media, are the most effective types of support in helping them manage stress. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening social support networks to enhance the mental well-being of Generation Z in the modern era.

This study's results align with previous research demonstrating that social support acts as a buffer against stress. Cohen & Wills (1985) found that social support can mitigate the negative effects of stress and improve mental well-being. House (1983) also emphasized the importance of various forms of social support in helping individuals cope with life pressures.

Additionally, research by the American Psychological Association (2018) shows that Generation Z experiences higher levels of stress compared to other generations, particularly due to academic demands and social media pressures. This study also supports Piko (2001) findings that adequate social support can help reduce the negative impacts of stress and improve mental well-being.

However, this study also provides new insights by showing differences in stress levels across age groups within Generation Z. The 12-17 age group reported higher stress levels compared to other age groups, suggesting that social support interventions need to be tailored to the specific needs of different age groups within Generation Z.

The findings of this study have several important practical implications for reducing stress levels among Generation Z in Bandung:

1. **Strengthening Family Support Networks:** Given the importance of emotional support from family, programs aimed at strengthening family bonds and communication among family members could be highly beneficial. Families could be offered training or counseling to enhance their skills in providing emotional support.
2. **Leveraging Technology for Social Support:** Since the internet and social media are primary sources of informational support, digital platforms can be utilized to provide accurate and helpful information on stress management and mental health. Apps and websites offering advice and support could be specifically designed for Generation Z.

3. **Support Programs in Schools and Universities:** Schools and universities could develop more structured social support programs, such as psychological counseling, peer support groups, and extracurricular activities that promote positive social interactions.
4. **Mental Health Awareness Campaigns:** Campaigns that raise awareness about the importance of social support and mental health can help reduce stigma and encourage Generation Z to seek help when needed.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations for interventions and social support programs that could be implemented are:

1. **Social and Emotional Skills Training:** Programs that teach social and emotional skills to Generation Z can help them build stronger relationships and provide and receive social support more effectively.
2. **Digital Platforms for Mental Support:** Developing and promoting digital platforms that offer mental health services, such as online therapy, discussion forums, and educational resources on stress management, can help Generation Z access the support they need easily.
3. **Collaboration with Local Communities:** City governments, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations can collaborate to create social support programs involving local communities. This could include youth activity centers, support groups, or mentoring programs with adults who can provide emotional support and feedback.
4. **School-Based Interventions:** Schools can be a strategic venue for social support interventions. Programs such as peer counseling, teacher training in providing emotional support, and group activities that strengthen student solidarity can help reduce stress levels.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the role of social support in managing stress among Generation Z in Bandung City, revealing that social support significantly impacts stress reduction within this group. Specifically, the research highlights that emotional and informational support are particularly effective. Emotional support from family and close friends, alongside informational support from the internet and social media, plays a crucial role in alleviating stress. The majority of respondents reported that emotional support from family (70%) and friends (60%) helps them feel more valued and supported, while 80% rely on the internet for vital information.

Further analysis established a significant negative relationship between social support and stress levels. The data shows that higher levels of social support correspond to lower reported stress levels, with emotional and informational support having the most substantial impact on reducing stress. This connection underscores the critical role that various forms of support play in managing stress effectively.

Moreover, the study found notable variations in stress levels based on age groups within Generation Z. Specifically, the 12-17 age group reported higher stress levels compared to the 18-22 and 23-27 age groups. This variation suggests that younger individuals are more susceptible to stress and therefore require more intensive and

targeted support to address their needs. This age-related disparity emphasizes the need for tailored interventions to better support the younger segment of Generation Z.

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