

# PERMA: A Multidimensional Framework of Well-being in Indonesian Adults

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**Keywords:** Well-being theory, PERMA, Positive Psychology.

**Abstract:** Well-being is considered an important factor to support humans to function positively in the environment. Seligman's PERMA explains the 5 dimensions that create well-being which are positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. This research involved 112 individuals aged 18-63 as respondents, using survey technique with the PERMA questionnaire; and the data analysis technique used was descriptive analysis. The result of this research points to high scores across all dimensions of PERMA well-being, with Engagement emerging as the highest rated dimension and Positive emotion as the lowest dimension. The highest correlation between Positive Emotion and Meaning becomes the basis of this research to suggest the development of strategies to improve wellbeing in adults. The limitation of this research is minimal number of sample. This has an impact on the results of this research, which can only be used to describe the PERMA well-being of the respondents of this research. In addition, it is hoped that further research will not only examine the profile of the 5 dimensions of PERMA but also link to other factors that affect well-being such as physical and spiritual health, flow, gratitude, and happiness to obtain a more comprehensive analysis related to PERMA well-being.


## 1 INTRODUCTION


This research focuses on developing studies in the positive psychology field, specifically to discuss well-being which is an important achievement of an individual in living his/her life. Seligman (2002) emphasized that the goal of psychology is initially to heal individuals from mental illnesses, identify and further research human talents, and continue to develop their strengths, and also help humans achieve a more meaningful life. However, after world war II, it turned out that psychology had only succeeded in answering the first goal; to heal individuals from mental illness. This is what eventually becomes the emergence point of positive psychology whose aim is to restore the three main objectives of psychology (Compton, 2005)

Positive psychology discusses that Individuals achieve well-being when they have a good, pleasant, and meaningful life. This will assist humans to serve more positively so that they can develop themselves, their families, and society at large (Seligman, 2002).

This is what underlies a lot of research that has been developing related to well-being. Several approaches were developed to explain this concept of well-being; starting from the subjective well-being, that addresses subjective evaluation results of individuals regarding their life process (Diener & Ryan, 2009), to psychological well-being, which is a concept that discusses individuals' evaluation of life processes in facing challenges and also continues to function positively in the environment (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). PERMA is a multidimensional framework of well-being that examines well-being from 5 main dimensions.

PERMA well-being is defined as the concept of individual welfare through three dimensions, namely Positive emotion, Engagement, and Meaning. Then, in 2006 Seligman completed the concept into 5 dimensions that show well-being as a comprehensive well-being concept including hedonic and eudaimonic. The five dimensions are Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA). These PERMA

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dimensions show the high level of well-being, or what is called the multidimensional framework of well-being (Seligman, 2013).

The first dimension is Positive emotion, an important part of well-being that consists of fun, joy, happiness, and other emotions that are part of positive emotions. The second dimension is engagement. It is defined by focusing on something being done and feeling the pleasure of being fully involved with what is being done. The third dimension is Relationship / positive Relationship. Humans need one another; therefore, they need to improve their welfare by building strong relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and other people around them. Meaning is the fourth dimension, and it is described as the meaning of an individual's life. Life will be more meaningful if individuals are capable of dedicating themselves more to broader things that have impacts not only on themselves but also on other people. The last dimension is Accomplishment. This dimension discusses the goals that can be obtained, whether it is a small, medium, or large goal. Prosperity develops when an individual grows by achieving the life goals he/she has set. If someone has these five dimensions, then that person's life will feel prosperous (Seligman, 2013).

Well-being has multiple characters both in the method and in the elaboration of its conceptual content. Positive emotion is a subjective variable that defines what an individual thinks and feels, while Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Accomplishment have subjective and objective dimensions. This is likely to illustrate that well-being does not stop at a cognitive level but appears in the form of behavior that is applied in the life of an individual. If individuals achieve well-being, they will develop and add a positive contribution to their environment.

This study will emphasize the use of the PERMA approach to further research adults in Indonesia. Indonesia is a country that has a lot of natural and cultural resources. It is because Indonesia is an archipelago that has different ethnicities, cultures, races, and religions where each culture, caste, and religion has very diverse characteristics. This diversity guides Indonesian people to have an understanding of the values or beliefs that underlie individuals to behave and also to function in society (Dewi & Rosyida, 2017).

The diversity of cultures, ethnicities, races, and religions are probable to lead to a variety of appreciations about living a prosperous life for each individual. Previous studies that examined well-being in Indonesian society, stated that positive emotion

and engagement are the highest dimensions of all well-being dimensions. The definition of well-being in Indonesian society is a balance in all aspects of human life that includes the fulfillment of all basic needs, physical, psychological, social, financial, spiritual health aspects, as well as the achievement of goals, acceptance, gratitude, and happiness. The research also found the factors that influence the well-being of Indonesian people, namely internal (physical health, gratitude, happiness) and external factors (global economy, social condition). Methods that can be undertaken to improve the well-being of the Indonesian people are by maintaining physical and mental health, financial management, improving social and spiritual aspects, and increasing self-efficacy (Dewi & Rosyida, 2017).

It is stated that it is important to continue to develop studies regarding this PERMA well-being in various fields of life as well as at various stages of development. The stage of adult development is one of the most appropriate stages to measure well-being as several theoretical views, such as Erikson, Rogers, Jung, Maslow, and Alport all state that in adulthood there has been a development of individual maturity and this will help them to function optimally in life (Ryff, 1995). The age range for adults is quite long, starting from the age of 18 years to over 60 years (Santrock, 2019). Therefore, this study will focus on PERMA Well-being in adults in Indonesia.

## 2 METHODS

### 2.1 Research Designs & Procedures

This research was conducted using a descriptive survey method. Survey research uses some basic research procedures to obtain information from people in their natural environment. Researchers who use the survey method do not manipulate the variables but impose some limitations on the participants using specific survey instruments (Graziano & Raulin, 2014). Systematically, this research design can be described as follows:



Chart 1: Research Procedure.

## 2.2 Research Variables

The variable in this study is PERMA: multidimensional framework of well-being which is a comprehensive individual welfare that includes hedonic and eudaimonic formed from five main dimensions, namely Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Seligman, 2011).

## 2.3 Measuring Instruments

The measuring instrument of this research is the PERMA questionnaire that was adapted from the “Studi well-being pada masyarakat Indonesia” (Dewi & Rosyida, 2017) which was adjusted into 15 items in Bahasa Indonesia covering five main dimensions of PERMA well-being, namely Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning and Accomplishment (Seligman, 2013).

## 2.4 Validity & Reliability of Measuring Instruments

The validity of the measuring instrument aims to determine the extent to which a measuring instrument can test the attributes or things to be measured. The higher the validity of the measuring instrument, the more it shows what should be measured. The validity test that has been carried out is construct validity. It is a measuring instrument prepared based on a valid theory, that is the PERMA well-being theory from Seligman (2011). The calculated correlation coefficient will determine whether an item can be utilized or discarded. Statistical testing used SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Service) 20.0 for Windows with the spearman rank formula. The measurement of the validity of the 15 PERMA questionnaire items employed in this study has a result of 0.394 – 0.797.

The reliability test of this measuring instrument is aimed at determining the extent to which the measuring instrument utilized has a level of accuracy, trustworthiness, and stability in measuring a certain variable. The reliability of the measuring instrument was tested with Alpha Cronbach using SPSS 20.0 for Windows. The results derived from the calculation of the reliability of the PERMA well-being measuring instrument used is 0.914. The number is categorized as very high reliability.

Table 1: Validity 15 items of PERMA questionnaire.

No.	Item in Bahasa Indonesia	Validity
1	How much of time do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your goals?	.599**
2	How often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?	.618**
3	In general, how often do you feel joyful?	.790**
4	How often do you achieve the important goals you have set for yourself?	.715**
5	In general, to what extent do you lead a purposeful and meaningful life?	.752**
6	To what extent do you receive help and support from others when you need it?	.502**
7	In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do in life is valuable and worthwhile?	.657**
8	In general, to what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?	.642**
9	In general, how often do you feel positive?	.666**
10	How often are you able to handle your responsibilities?	.534**
11	How often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?	.394**
12	To what extent do you feel loved?	.685**
13	To what extent do you generally feel you have a sense of direction in your life?	.776**
14	How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?	.748**
15	In general, to what extent do you feel contented?	.797**

## 2.5 Population & Sampling

The population in this study is all adults in Indonesia. Sampling that was carried out is snowball sampling, by setting criteria for adult age (18 years and over) and living in Indonesia. Respondents were recruited through a process of disseminating information on social media (WhatsApp & Instagram), containing a brief explanation of the research, respondent characteristics, and a Google form link to the PERMA Well-being questionnaire. The questionnaire link was distributed from November 2020 to February 2021 (4

months). From the specified time limit, 112 respondents filled out the questionnaire completely.

### 2.6 Data Analysis

The analysis technique applied was the descriptive analysis technique. It is a technique of analyzing data by describing the data that has been collected. In this research, the demographic data of the respondents, mean score of each PERMA dimension, and also correlation among the five PERMA dimensions to describe the PERMA well-being of the respondent will be presented.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of descriptive data analysis PERMA: multidimensional framework of well-being retrieved through 112 respondents will be shown. The final result of the research will be presented through a description of the results of each PERMA's dimension as the 5 main pillars that can shape welfare or is often referred to as well-being.

### 3.1 Results

From the 112 respondents, the demographic description obtained is as follows:

Table 2: The demographic data.

Demographic Data	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Woman	91	81.25%
Man	21	18.75%
Level of Education		
Undergraduate	89	79.46%
Graduate	21	18.75%
Postgraduate	2	1.79%
Daily Activity		
Student	62	55.36%
Employee	39	34.82%
Unemployed	11	9.82%
Ethnic Group		
Chinese	38	33.92 %
Javanese	22	19.64 %
Sundanese	19	16.96 %
Batak	13	11.60 %
Balinese	5	4.46 %
Not disclosed	15	13.39 %

The descriptive analysis applied on the data of 112 adult in Indonesia shows the following description of the results:

Table 3: Mean, standard deviations, minimum & maximum score of five PERMA dimensions.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
P	112	7.56	1.61	1,00	10,00
E	112	8.03	1.46	1,00	10,00
R	112	7.67	1.71	1,00	10,00
M	112	7.57	1.71	1,00	10,00
A	112	7.61	1.48	1,00	10,00

Table 3 shows that all PERMA dimension mean scores are above the mid-point of the scale. It can be seen that dimension scores range from Positive Emotion as lowest (M = 7.56, SD = 1.61) to Engagement as highest (M = 8.03, SD = 1.46). This is in accordance with research on the general population, which also shows that the highest mean score is in the Engagement dimension and the lowest is the Positive Emotion dimension. (Butler and Kern, 2016). The second highest mean score is Relationship dimension (M = 7.67, SD = 1.71). This dimension is related to building positive relationships with the people around individuals. It complies with the culture of Indonesian society which is more collective. Collective society has stronger ties with partners, families, and even with the surrounding community (Bejanyan, Marshall, & Ferenczi, 2015). The lowest mean score is Positive Emotion dimension (M = 7.56, SD = 1.61). Low Positive Emotion shows a less positive appreciation of the situation that is lived in (Seligman, 2013).

In addition to calculating the mean, this research also measures the correlation of each PERMA dimension. Table 4 shows the correlation between each PERMA dimension. This is also carried out in the research of PERMA in the general population. Both show that each PERMA dimension is positively correlated with each other with a moderate value. Furthermore, it is also found that the correlation between Positive emotion and Meaning obtained the highest correlation score (r = 0.721). This is also in line with the findings of the PERMA study on the Classical Musician professionals (Ascenso, Perkins, & Williamon, 2018). For instance, as participants reported greater Positive Emotion, they also tended to report higher levels of Meaning. This is in line with the theory that explains by living Positive emotion in the process of achieving goals will help individuals attain meaning in life (Steger, 2018).

Table 4: Correlation among PERMA dimensions.

	P	E	R	M	A
P	1				
E	.534**	1			
R	.703**	.442**	1		
M	.721**	.530**	.683**	1	
A	.615**	.425**	.499**	.695**	1

\*\* $p < 0.01$  P, Positive Emotion; E, Engagement; R, Relation; M, Meaning; A, Accomplishment

Table 5 shows in detail the comparison of PERMA's mean score between this research and general population research. This research collected data from various studies conducted on adults aged 18-65 years ( $N = 31965$ ). Respondents in the general population research came from various backgrounds from countries around the world, which were dominated by countries in the USA as much as 60%. (Butler & Kern, 2016). This data comparison shows a similarity in which the mean score of each dimension is above the median score. In addition, it is also found that Positive emotion is the dimension with the lowest mean score and the Engagement dimension is the dimension with the highest mean score in both research. This data comparison is fascinating as the mean score of the five PERMA dimensions in this study is significantly higher ( $p < \alpha 0.05$ ) than scores for general population, as determined by independent-samples t-tests conducted using summary values. Effect sizes (Cohen's  $d$ ) were modest.

### 3.2 Discussions

In this study, the PERMA well-being in adults shows high results in every dimension. This can be seen from the mean scores of each PERMA dimension that are above the median score. In addition, when compared to the mean score in the general population,

there is a significant difference in the five dimensions. Comparing with the sample in the general population study, the number of samples in this research is regarded very limited. Therefore, we need to be careful in interpreting the significance differences of these mean scores. However, this finding is very interesting because none of the mean scores of the five PERMA dimensions in this research is below the mean scores of the general population. The Engagement dimension in adults as the dimension with the highest mean score is the main finding in this study. It is following the findings in previous research, both in PERMA research in Indonesian society (Dewi & Rosyida, 2017) and in the general population in the world (Butler & Kern, 2016).

This shows that the respondents focus on something that is being done and really feel fully involved with what is being done. This involvement is a psychological involvement related to daily activities (e.g., pervasive feelings, interest, and involvement in life). Individuals with high Engagement will focus on something that is done and feel pleased from it. They will also be fully involved with something that is being done. When this happens it will help them feel more prosperous. This is in line with previous research, that is "Well-being study in Indonesian society" which also shows that the Engagement dimension is the most dominant dimension emerging from other dimensions of PERMA (Dewi & Rosyida, 2017).

The second-highest mean score is the Relationship dimension that is related to building positive relationships with the people around individuals. It complies with the culture of Indonesian society which is more collective. Collective society has stronger ties with partners, families, and even with the surrounding community. By having a positive bond with the people around them,

Table 5: Independent samples t-test result comparing mean scores of adult in Indonesia and general population groups for each PERMA dimension.

PERMA Dimension	Adult in Indonesia (2021)			General Population (Butler and Kern, 2016)					
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	T	p	Cohen's d
Positive Emotion	112	7.56	1.60821	31965	6.69	1.97	4,67	<0.00001	0,48
Engagement	112	8.03	1.45864	31962	7.25	1.71	4,82	<0.00001	0,49
Relation	112	7.67	1.70512	31940	6.90	2.15	3,79	0.000125	0,4
Meaning	112	7.57	1.70713	31931	7.06	2.17	2,48	0.00724	0,26
Accomplishment	112	7.61	1.47945	31963	7.21	1.78	2,38	0.009633	0,24

All scales range from 0 to 10, where 0 = lowest and 10 = highest

individuals will feel more prosperous since they have a Positive Relationship with their environment at large (Bejanyan et al., 2015).

Another similarity that is found between this research and research in the general population (Butler & Kern, 2016) is that the Positive Emotion dimension has the lowest mean score. In general population research, it is explained that increasing positive emotion is one of the most significant ways to improve well-being in individuals. Moreover, there is a lot of research focusing on the importance of Positive Emotion in increasing the well-being of individuals. One research that specifically discussed Positive Emotion and well-being stated that the development of positive emotion is positively correlated with the development of psychological resilience and physical health, both of which will help individuals to achieve happiness and well-being (Le Nguyen & Fredrickson, 2018). However, this finding is contrary to the previous research on the study of the well-being of the Indonesian people which showed that Positive emotion was one of the 2 dimensions with the highest mean score besides the Engagement dimension. This becomes an interesting finding, and it will be a good starting point for further research on PERMA, especially related to the Positive emotion dimension. Respondents experience Positive Emotion as a general appreciation that leads to an evaluation of their quality of life. In contrast, in theory, the types of Positive Emotion (joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe) will be more experienced when individuals are mindful of every activity they do. Experiencing more Positive Emotion in every activity will help individuals to find meaning in their lives.

The next finding is that each PERMA dimension in this research is positively correlated with each other with a moderate value. This strengthens the findings from other research such as the PERMA study on the Classical Musician professionals (Ascenso et al., 2018), the cross-cultural comparison of the PERMA model of well-being research (Khaw & Kern, 2015) and PERMA research on the general population in the world (Butler & Kern, 2016). Specifically, the highest correlation between dimensions found in the classical musician and general population studies is similar to the findings in this study which shows that the highest correlation is found between the Positive emotion and Meaning dimensions. This is in line with the theory that explains by living Positive emotion in the process of achieving goals will help individuals attain meaning in life (Steger, 2018). Other research also suggests

that positive emotion be a core part of well-being or flourishing (Huppert & So, 2013).

From the process and the results of this research, there are some notes gathered related to things that need further attention for the development of this research. It appears that the number of respondents attained in this research is very minimal to represent adults in Indonesia. This has an impact on the results of this research, which can only be used to describe the PERMA well-being of the respondents of this research only. Hence, the results of this study cannot be generalized to every adult in Indonesia. However, this subject will continue to be studied and further research will be conducted, particularly related to Positive Emotion & Meaning.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

PERMA well-being is a comprehensive concept of welfare which states that human well-being, including hedonic and eudaimonic, is built from 5 dimensions: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA). From this research, it can be concluded that the respondents' well-being is considered high, with Engagement dimension producing the highest mean score and Meaning dimension producing the lowest mean score among the five PERMA dimension. Furthermore, each PERMA dimension is positively correlated with each other. This shows that each dimension will support each other to form respondents' well-being. To get a more optimal well-being, it is recommended to increase the Positive Emotion and Meaning dimensions. Positive emotion dimension can be increased by practicing mindfulness, Gratitude Journal, and creating Positive Experiences. Meanwhile, meaning dimension can be increased by spending time with activity that really improve the sense of meaning in life, such as volunteering, performing acts of kindness in daily activity. Regarding the limited number of respondents, which becomes the limitation of this study, it is highly recommended that further research obtain a more significant number of respondents and collect specific demographic data such as geographical location, socio-economic status, etc. Therefore, the results can be generalized for Indonesian adults as a whole. In addition, it is also highly recommended to link PERMA well-being with other factors that affect well-being, such as physical and spiritual health, flow, gratitude, and happiness. This will develop an understanding related to well-being in Indonesian adults.

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