Did Trust in Government Induce the Impact of Loneliness and Self-Control on Student's Compliance during Social Restriction Implementation? a Moderator Analysis

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Abstract

The mitigation strategy employed in addressing the prolonged pandemic situation in Indonesia yielded a discernment: collaborative efforts between individuals and the government were imperative to achieve the desired objectives. Despite the emergence of numerous psychological challenges among individuals during the pandemic, the pivotal role of public compliance became particularly evident during the implementation of social restrictions. Government initiatives to mitigate risks would not attain optimal effectiveness without substantial support from the public, either through trusting the government or adhering to regulatory measures. This study seeks to elucidate the moderating role of government trust in the impact of loneliness and self-control on students' compliance with social restriction policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Conducted in early 2022 using a cross-sectional design, the study encompassed 401 undergraduate students from various regions in Indonesia. Employing Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA), the results demonstrated that trust in the government significantly moderated the effects of loneliness and self-control on student compliance (F(6, 403) = 101.017, p<0.001). The findings revealed that students were more inclined to comply with social restriction policies, even when experiencing loneliness, if they maintained trust in the government. This study underscores the significant role of government trust, particularly in situations necessitating cooperative behavior from the public in adhering to policies.

Keywords: Compliance, government, loneliness, self-control, trust
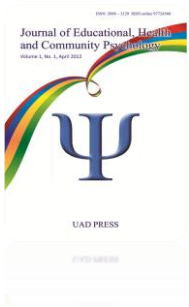
Introduction

The pandemic situation in Indonesia has yielded numerous insights in recent years, particularly concerning mitigation strategies amid the crisis. Despite an initial delay, the Indonesian government opted to enforce social restriction policies to manage the pandemic by interrupting the transmission chain of Covid-19 (Muttaqin, 2020; Gitiyarko, 2021). Regrettably, public endorsement of this strategy was not wholehearted, evident in numerous violations during its implementation. At its nadir, the incidence of Covid-19 infections significantly spiked when social restrictions were imposed (Fikhasari, 2022; Kurnia, 2021).

Although social restrictions have shown potential in reducing Covid-19 transmission in other countries (Chu et al., 2020; Lio et al., 2021; Moosa, 2020), implementing such measures to limit individual interactions during a pandemic confronts various challenges, particularly when compliance is expected amidst public discomfort. In fact, mass media in Indonesia reported widespread violations during the implementation of social restrictions (Lesmana & Muflih, 2021; Media Indonesia, 2021; Okezone, 2021; Yandwiputra, 2021). Similar challenges were observed in several countries, where issues of compliance consistently emerged in response to Covid-19 prevention policies (Bélanger & Leander, 2020; Taylor, 2020; Taylor & Asmundson, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). These circumstances underscore the significant challenges of public compliance within the context of pandemic mitigation strategies, particularly in the execution of social restrictions.

Throughout the implementation of various policies amid the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, attention has been directed towards public compliance as a critical aspect. Previous studies have highlighted that the success of preventing the spread of Covid-19 in each country is highly contingent on the collective contribution of all citizens (Anderson et al., 2020; Van Bavel et al., 2020). Individuals must cultivate a sense of social responsibility to adhere to policies implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic situation (Oosterhoff & Palmer, 2020). The minimal contribution the public can make in dealing with Covid-19 is to comply with the policies in place.

Compliance is defined as an individual's response to directives from a figure of greater influence, positional authority, or direct requests from others, irrespective of positional power (Branscombe & Baron, 2023). It can also be construed as a specific behavioral response to fulfill directions or requests from others (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Chang et al. (2020) assert that compliance plays a pivotal role in determining the success of efforts to manage the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated policies did not significantly distress the public. However, social restrictions had profound psychological impacts, such as the emergence of boredom and loneliness, influencing individuals' psychological well-being (Banerjee & Rai, 2020). Unfortunately, the emotional and psychological consequences of reduced social interactions prompted individuals to violate applicable rules or policies (Guo et al., 2023; Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Martarelli & Wolff, 2020; Wolff et al., 2020). Violating social restriction policies was perceived as inevitable due to situational pressure, with relief from boredom, stress and loneliness often cited as justifications for non-compliance.

Loneliness emerged as a prevalent mental health issue during the Covid-19 pandemic (Groarke et al., 2020; Killgore et al., 2020; Li & Wang, 2020). Schultz & Newman (2023) contend that the implementation of social distancing severed interpersonal connections, leading individuals to become more self-focused. Consequently, the diminished sense of responsibility stemming from loneliness contributed to the perception that compliance with social restriction policies was not beneficial (Schultz & Newman, 2023). This suggests that loneliness may act as a catalyst for individual non-compliance, driven by the desire for social interaction.

Previous research indicates that social restriction violations are linked to loneliness resulting from a lack of social relationships (Killgore et al., 2020; Schultz & Newman, 2023; Guo et al., 2023). Interestingly, some studies suggest that the public did not experience significant loneliness issues during the Covid-19 pandemic. Amid social restriction policies, individuals empathized with each other's feelings, fostering mutual support as they shared a common situation (Luchetti et al., 2020; Sutin et al., 2020). If individuals did not experience loneliness during the pandemic, the rationale for
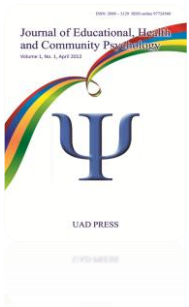
non-compliance based on the fulfillment of social needs becomes less relevant when implementing various policies.

It was not uncommon to encounter individuals who breached social restriction policies amid the Covid-19 pandemic (Taylor, 2020). The constraints on social interactions during this period, leading to a desire for direct interaction, constituted a prevalent argument among policy violators. However, the act of violating regulations or policies could be intentional or unintentional, and non-compliance with Covid-19 management and prevention policies was intricately linked to internal factors. Adults possessed the autonomy to decide whether to adhere to or infringe upon these regulations.

Self-control emerged as a pivotal factor during the implementation of social restrictions, playing a substantial role in managing individual desires while considering broader implications. Defined as an individual's ability to modify behavioral responses to achieve a goal (Averill, 1973; Shenhav et al., 2013), self-control extended to resisting "temptation" for immediate gratification in favor of long-term goals (Stillman et al., 2017). Previous research indicated a positive correlation between self-control and compliance with various Covid-19 policies, such as mask usage and social distancing (Bieleke et al., 2023; Cheng, 2020; Wolff et al., 2020; Xu & Cheng, 2021).

Apart from internal factors, public compliance was purportedly influenced by trust in policymakers or the government. Studies during the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that people were more inclined to comply with prevention and management policies when they trusted their government (Cheng, 2020; Guo et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2021). Trust in the government fostered cooperative behavior in adopting healthy practices and adhering to health protocols (Bargain & Aminjonov, 2020; Han et al., 2021; Olsen & Hjorth, 2020; Van Bavel et al., 2020), emphasizing its crucial role in community compliance during the pandemic.

Government strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic could impact public trust. For instance, effectively communicating pandemic mitigation plans or implementing lockdowns during high-risk

situations could enhance public trust (Overton et al., 2021; Sauer et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). In conclusion, public compliance was more likely when there was trust in the policymaker.

Despite the challenges, surviving the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia was anticipated due to technological advancements. Initially hopeful that people would cooperate with mitigation strategies, public compliance issues arose in Indonesia, attributed to government factors.

In Indonesia, public trust steadily declined early in the Covid-19 pandemic due to government missteps. The government's initial response, characterized by insensitive actions and disarrayed decisions, contributed to confusion and diminished public trust (Folia, 2021; Hakim, 2020; Mawardi, 2020). This lackluster response resulted in high infection and death rates (BBC News Indonesia, 2021; Nugraheny, 2021; Saputri, 2021), further eroding trust.

Despite the unsatisfactory initial government performance, pandemic mitigation strategies in Indonesia evolved positively by the end of 2021, with a significant decline in Covid-19 cases (Dewi & Sonia, 2021; Moegiarso, 2021; Rokom, 2021). Actions taken by the government led to a more optimistic trend in 2022, suggesting a successful restoration of public trust.

Policy violations during the pandemic were prevalent, including among university students who faced fewer conflicts of interest during policy implementation. Despite their advantageous situation, students violated restrictions, with some initiating demonstrations. This behavior contradicted expectations, given students' presumed rationality and tech-savvy characteristics. Studies indicated that students experienced notable mental health challenges during the pandemic, contributing to violations.

While existing studies explored psychological factors influencing compliance, few investigated how government trust interacted with issues like loneliness and self-control in predicting university students' compliance during social restrictions. This study aimed to identify the moderating effect of government trust between loneliness, self-control, and university students' compliance amid the
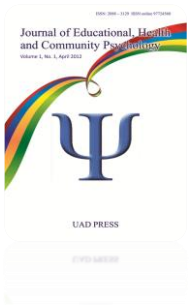
Covid-19 pandemic. The hypothesis posited that government trust would modify the relationship between loneliness, self-control, and compliance, strengthening student compliance despite challenges.

Method

Design

This investigation adopted a quantitative approach employing a cross-sectional study design, aimed at assessing the interplay between variables through data collection at a specific point in time. The study sought to discern the influence of loneliness and self-control on students' adherence to the PPKM policy, moderated by trust in the government. The research was conducted several months after the implementation of social restriction policies in Indonesia, as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
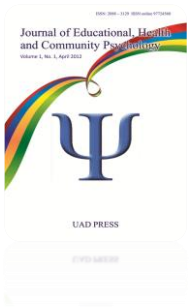
Participants

A total of 410 Indonesian university students participated in this study, representing diverse provinces across Indonesia. Data collection occurred from January to April 2022. Convenience sampling was employed, selecting active university students engaged in distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic as the inclusion criteria. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants provided informed consent before their involvement.

Measurement

The study utilized four instruments measuring loneliness, self-control, trust in the government, and compliance. To ensure contextual relevance, the researchers adapted the instruments for loneliness and trust in the government, while adopting instruments for compliance and self-control. All instruments were in Bahasa Indonesia, and their credibility was established in previous studies.

The instrument for compliance with the PPKM policy during the Covid-19 pandemic was adapted from Hendrawan & Rahayu (2021), consisting of 24 items based on Blass's (1999) compliance

theory. The Likert scale ranged from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"), with a higher total score indicating greater individual compliance with the PPKM policy.
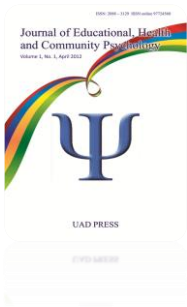
A 7-item instrument on public trust in government, developed by Mufti et al. (2020), measured trust during the Covid-19 pandemic. It included dimensions of willingness to endorse, share norms and values, and perceived efficacy, using a Likert scale from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). A higher score indicated greater confidence in the government's handling of Covid-19.

The self-control instrument, based on Averill's (1973) aspects, was developed by Hendrawan & Rahayu (2021), consisting of 24 items. The Likert scale ranged from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). This instrument specifically measured self-control during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a higher total score indicating better individual self-control.

To assess participants' loneliness, the De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale instrument from Gierveld & Tilburg (2006), adapted by Wedaloka & Turnip (2019), was used. It included 6 items divided into emotional and social loneliness dimensions, with responses on a Likert scale. The total score indicated the degree of loneliness, with higher scores indicating greater loneliness.

Data Analysis

Before hypothesis testing, the researchers conducted descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and pre-assumption tests to examine data distribution, identify outliers, and assess the linearity of variable relationships. Hypothesis testing utilized Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) to determine the significance of the moderator effect, with additional Hierarchical Regression Analysis to estimate interaction effects. The entire data analysis process employed JASP software version 0.17.2.1.

Result

Participant Characteristics

The study comprised 410 participants, comprising 328 females and 82 males, aged between 17 and 25 years (Mean = 20.59; SD = 1.33). All participants were actively enrolled university students engaged in Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh (PJJ) in adherence to pertinent regulations during the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite uneven distribution, the study successfully garnered student representation from diverse universities across Indonesia.

Approximately 74% of the participants had contracted Covid-19 during the implementation of PSBB and PPKM in Indonesia, while only 6% had not received the Covid-19 vaccine. A notable 99% of participants acknowledged the existence of Covid-19, with only 4 participants expressing disbelief in its existence. Intriguingly, when instructed to stay at home during the PPKM, only 41.5% of participants adhered strictly to the directive by refraining from leaving their residences. Further details are provided in Table 1.

Participants' Compliance, Loneliness, Self-control, and Trust in Government

A descriptive analysis was performed on the research variables, including participants' compliance, loneliness, self-control, and trust in government, to elucidate their manifestation during the enforcement of social restriction policies. The researchers juxtaposed participants' mean scores against the minimum and maximum scores achievable through the employed measurement instruments for each variable. Comprehensive information is provided in Table 2.

Table 1
Participant Characteristics Overview

Characteristics	F	Percentage (%)
1. Gender		
Male	82	20
Female	328	80
2. Domicile		
Sumatera	72	17,6
Jawa	278	67,8
Bali – Nusa Tenggara	14	3,40
Kalimantan	18	4,38
Sulawesi	24	5,84
Papua	4	0,98
3. Infected Covid-19		
Yes	105	25,6
No	305	74,4
4. Vaccine recipient status		
Not getting any	23	5,5
First-dose received	84	20,4
Second or third-dose received	304	74,1
5. Believed in Covid-19		
Yes	406	99
No	4	1
6. Frequency of breaking the social restriction during PPKM		
Never	170	41,5
1-3 times	179	43,7
4-6 times	42	10,2
> 7 times	19	4,7

Table 2
Participants' Compliance, Loneliness, Self-control, and Trust in Government

Variable	Min.	Max.	M	SD
1. Compliance	24	120	99,74	11,97
2. Loneliness	0	6	3,38	1,35
3. Self-control	24	120	94,31	9,53
4. Trust in Government	7	35	25,81	4,44

Note: N=410

In Table 2, the descriptive analysis results for the compliance variable indicate an average value of 99.74 (SD = 11.97), ranging from 24 to 120. The average compliance score aligns closely with the maximum attainable score, suggesting a high level of adherence to the PPKM policy among research participants.

Similarly, the descriptive analysis for the self-control variable, as presented in Table 2, yielded a mean score of 94.31 (SD=9.53), ranging from 24 to 120. The average self-control score also approaches the instrument's maximum score, indicating strong self-regulation among participants during the PPKM policy implementation.

Despite initial cognitive dissonance caused by the Indonesian government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, data from this study reveal a positive trust in the government among university students during the PPKM policy enforcement. Descriptive analysis for the trust in government variable (Table 2) demonstrates an average value of 25.81 (SD = 4.44), ranging from 7 to 35. The high average score suggests a favorable perception of government actions among participants.

Conversely, participants' responses regarding loneliness show less optimistic results. The mean loneliness score, obtained from all participants (Table 2), is 3.38 (SD=1.35), indicating a moderate level of loneliness within the sample. While the average score falls mid-range within the possible score spectrum of 0 to 6, it signifies some degree of loneliness experienced by participants.

Correlation Analysis

Following descriptive analysis, researchers conducted Pearson Correlation analysis to examine relationships between variables, particularly the independent and moderator variables on the dependent variable. Table 3 presents the detailed correlation coefficients, shedding light on the dynamics of inter-variable relationships.

Table 3
Bivariate correlations between all variables and compliance

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Compliance	-			
2. Loneliness	-0.161**	-		
3. Self-control	0.750**	-0.147*	-	
4. Trust in Government	0.228**	0.220**	0.195**	-

Note: *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level; **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As delineated in Table 3, the outcomes of the correlation analysis reveal a statistically significant bidirectional association among all variables under scrutiny in this investigation. The examination discloses that compliance exhibits a significant correlation with loneliness ($r = -0.161$; sig. < 0.01), self-control ($r = 0.750$; sig. < 0.01), and trust in government ($r = 0.228$; sig. < 0.01). Notably, among the trio of variables, only loneliness manifests a negative correlation with compliance, while self-control and trust in government display positive correlations.

The empirical evidence underscores that loneliness is inversely correlated with individual compliance with PPKM policies. Consequently, heightened levels of loneliness experienced by a participant correspond to diminished compliance. This observation suggests that individuals experiencing loneliness during PPKM policy implementation tend to exhibit lower levels of compliance.

Contrastingly, the findings pertaining to self-control and trust in government elucidate positive relationships with compliance. Participants demonstrating superior self-control exhibit heightened compliance with PPKM policies. Similarly, individuals harboring positive levels of trust in government are inclined to display greater compliance. This observation implies a robust and affirmative association between individual compliance with PPKM policy, self-control, and trust in government. Implicitly, one can infer that enhanced behavioral management skills and a favorable disposition toward the government contribute to increased likelihood of compliance and adherence to PPKM policies.

Hypothesis Testing

Within the confines of this study, researchers posited that trust in government serves as a significant moderator in the interaction between loneliness and self-control, influencing compliance. To scrutinize this hypothesis, researchers employed moderated regression analysis (MRA). This analytical approach was employed to discern alterations in the efficacy of contributions prior to and subsequent to incorporating trust in government as a moderator variable.

Comparison of two models facilitated the evaluation of the interaction effect of loneliness and self-control variables on trust in government. The initial model solely considered the contributions of loneliness and self-control, whereas the subsequent model incorporated the interaction effect between loneliness and self-control variables, with trust in government serving as a moderator. Age and gender were integrated as covariates in the model testing process, contributing to the identification of shifts in effective contributions ensuing the inclusion of trust in government as a moderator variable.

Table 4
Hypothesis testing result

| Variable	Model 1					Model 2				
	B	**t**	**sig.**	**LL CI**	**UL CI**	**β**	**t**	**sig.**	**LL CI**	**UL CI**
1. Age	-0.70	-2.40	0.02	-1.27	-0.13	-0.74	-2.61	0.01	-1.30	-0.18
2. Gender	2.82	2.89	0.01	0.90	4.74	3.13	3.27	0.01	1.25	5.01
3. Loneliness	-0.41	-1.43	0.15	-0.98	0.16	-0.84	-1.87	0.04	-0.15	5.83
4. Self-control	0.91	22.1	<0.01	0.84	0.99	0.62	7.41	<0.01	0.46	0.79
5. Loneliness * Trust in Government						-0.14	-2.36	0.02	-0.25	-0.02
6. Self-control * Trust in Government						0.01	3.72	<0.01	0.01	0.02
R²	0.580					0.601				
F (df1, df2)	139.831 (df 4, 405)					101.017 (df 6, 403)				
Sig	<0.001					<0.001				

The moderation testing in this study involved an examination of two models (refer to Table 4). Model 1 disregarded the interaction effect of loneliness and self-control with trust in government as moderators. In contrast, Model 2 incorporated trust in government as a moderator variable, considering the interaction effect of loneliness and self-control variables in the MRA analysis.

The results of hypothesis testing revealed a significant role of trust in government as a moderator in the relationship between loneliness and self-control on compliance (F=101.017; p < 0.05). Model 1 indicated significant effects of loneliness and self-control on compliance (F=139.83; p < 0.05), constituting 58% contribution. However, Model 2, incorporating trust in government as a moderator, demonstrated a substantial increase in the contribution to compliance (60.1%). This suggests an augmented influence of all independent variables after accounting for trust in government as a moderator.

In Model 1, self-control significantly affected compliance (β=0.91; p < 0.01), indicating that higher self-control in university students correlates with increased compliance during the Covid-19 pandemic. In contrast, loneliness did not exhibit a significant effect on compliance in Model 1 (β=-0.41; p > 0.05). However, Model 2 showcased significant influences of both self-control and loneliness on compliance after incorporating trust in government as a moderating variable.

Within Model 2, loneliness and self-control independently exerted significant effects on compliance. Similar to Model 1, self-control positively influenced compliance (β=0.62; p < 0.01), while loneliness had a negative effect (β=-0.41; p < 0.05). Despite the consistency in the direction of influence, loneliness demonstrated a significant negative effect in Model 2, indicating a weakening of student compliance during the Covid-19 pandemic when experiencing loneliness.

The analysis indicated that trust in government acted as a moderator, strengthening the relationship between self-control variables and compliance (β=0.01; p < 0.001). Notably, although loneliness retained a negative significant effect on compliance, trust in government modified the contribution of loneliness to compliance (β=-0.14; p < 0.01). This affirms that trust in government plays a crucial moderating role for loneliness and self-control, influencing students' compliance with social restriction policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Refer to Figure 1 for comprehensive results.
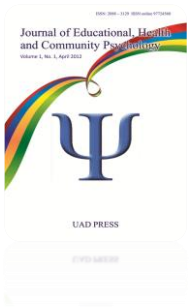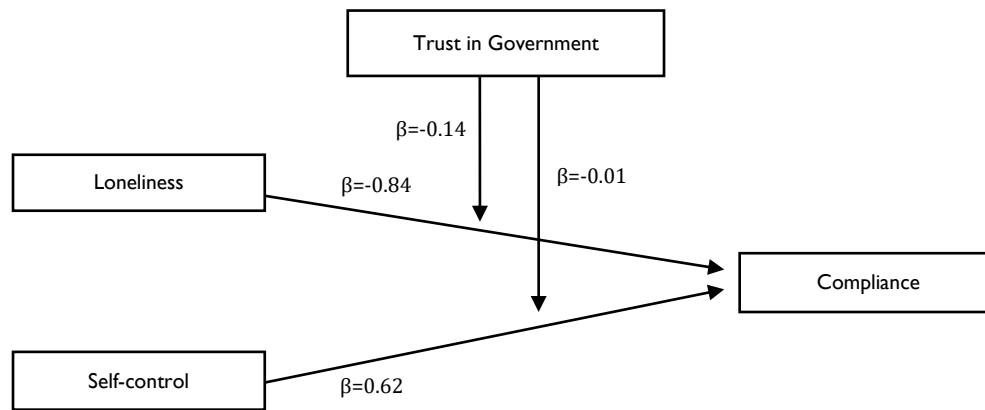
Picture 1. Results of Moderated Regression Analysis on all variables

Discussion

In general, this study discerned that loneliness, self-control, and trust in the government significantly contribute to university students' adherence to social restriction policies. The study's findings underscore a substantial impact of loneliness and self-control on students' compliance with social restriction policies during the Covid-19 pandemic, with trust in the government serving as a moderator variable. Consequently, this research identifies trust in the government as a significant moderator, shaping the relationship between loneliness and self-control on compliance.

The positive interaction between self-control and trust in the government is associated with increased compliance, indicating that individuals are more likely to adhere to social restriction policies when their self-control is complemented by trust in the government. Although the interaction between loneliness and trust in the government exhibits a negative effect on compliance, the study reveals that university students are more inclined to comply with social restriction policies despite experiencing loneliness when supported by trust in the government.

Consistent with expectations, this study affirms that loneliness is a significant factor influencing compliance. As students experience increased loneliness, their compliance with social restriction
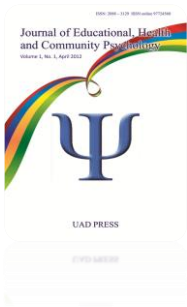
policies diminishes. This aligns with arguments presented by Guo et al. (2023), Killgore et al. (2020), and Schultz & Newman (2023), suggesting an escalating tendency to violate social restriction policies during the Covid-19 pandemic due to heightened loneliness resulting from disrupted social relationships.

Despite the availability of alternatives such as technological interactions (Luchetti et al., 2020; Sutin et al., 2020), this study reveals persistent feelings of loneliness among students. This suggests that students experience dissatisfaction in their social relationships amid limited social activities during the Covid-19 pandemic, potentially driven by limited direct interactions, especially with peers, and boredom during the social restriction period.

From the outset, researchers suspected self-control as a pivotal factor in university students' compliance with social distancing policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study's results affirm this assumption, indicating that students exhibit higher compliance when endowed with strong self-control. These findings align with previous studies by Bieleke et al. (2023), Cheng (2020), and Xu & Cheng (2021), emphasizing the positive contribution of self-control to public compliance with pandemic-related guidelines.

The study further supports the importance of the role of politics and government in influencing compliance during pandemics, consistent with the findings of Barrios & Hochberg (2020) and Xu & Cheng (2021). Trust in politics and government emerges as a key factor leading to cooperative behavior and obedience to policies, as argued by Marien & Hooghe (2011) and Bargain & Aminjonov (2020). The study highlights trust in the government as a crucial moderator in the relationship between loneliness, self-control, and compliance with social restriction policies.

The findings emphasize that trust in the government modifies the influence of loneliness and self-control on student compliance during the Covid-19 pandemic. The interaction between loneliness and trust in the government diminishes the tendency to violate social restriction policies, indicating increased compliance when trust in the government is present. Similarly, the interaction between

self-control and trust in the government amplifies student compliance, underscoring the pivotal role of trust in shaping adherence behavior.

Despite the limitations, such as regional representation disparities and the retrospective nature of the study, the research suggests avenues for future investigations. The study's contribution lies in not only evaluating student compliance with social restriction policies but also addressing broader psychological variables contributing to compliance behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study serves as a valuable input for governments, emphasizing the need for sustained public trust through effective communication and policy implementation.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that trust in the government significantly moderates the impact of loneliness and self-control on university students' compliance with social restriction policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Trust in the government emerges as a crucial factor, enhancing the relationship between loneliness, self-control, and compliance. The study's results provide insights into the dynamics of compliance behavior and offer implications for policymakers in formulating effective strategies to address psychological aspects influencing public adherence to pandemic-related policies.

Acknowledgment

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