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COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND HAPPINESS: EVIDENCE FROM INSTAGRAM

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1. Introduction

- The **COVID-19 pandemic** affected many aspects of people's lives, including their well-being and happiness.
- In the pandemic context, **social media offers a rich source of information** for researchers to investigate the happiness levels of individuals and communities (Greyling et al., 2021; Situmorang, 2021).
- This study aims to **analyze the use of happiness-related hashtags** (e.g., #happy, #happiness) on **Instagram posts** before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the extent to which they differ or are similar across cultures.

2. Research Question

- How has Instagram's use of "happiness" hashtags changed prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic?

3. Datasets

- Focusing on posts in **English** and **Indonesian** languages, using CrowdTangle tools, we collected the posts from Instagram and divided the datasets into three periods:
  - **Pre-Pandemic** (March 11, 2019 - March 10, 2020)
  - **Pandemic Year 1** (March 11, 2020 - March 10, 2021)
  - **Pandemic Year 2** (March 11, 2021 - March 10, 2022)

Table 1
The Total Number of Datasets

Language	Keywords	Number of Posts
English	#happy, #happiness	2,356,354
Indonesian	#bahagia, #kebahagiaan	24,483
Total		2,380,837

What Is Happiness?

Lyubomirsky (2008), a positive psychology researcher, defines happiness as **"the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one's life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile"** (p. 32).
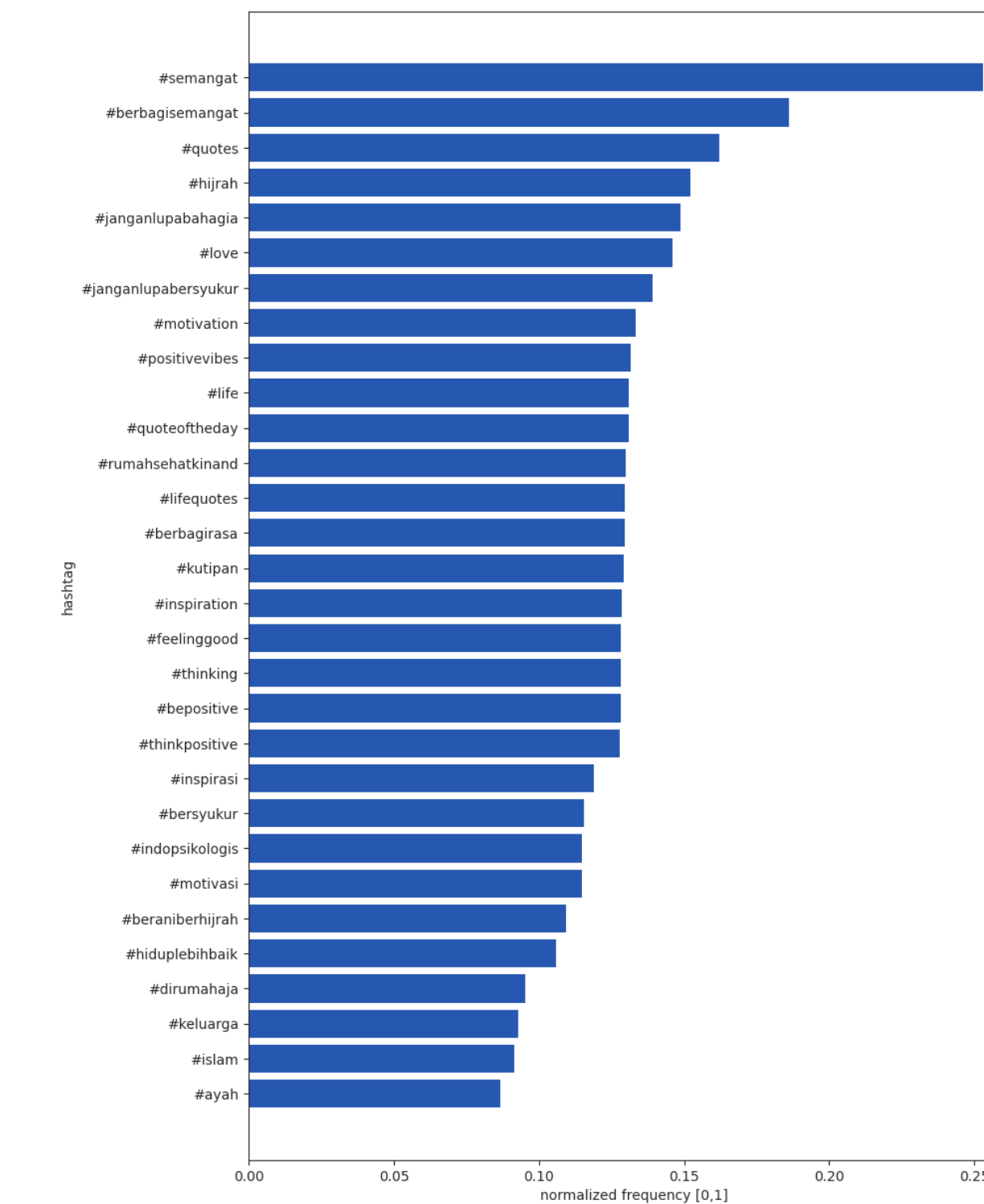
Figure 1
Word Cloud Visualizations of All Hashtags Posted in Conjunction with "Happiness" Hashtags in English and Indonesian
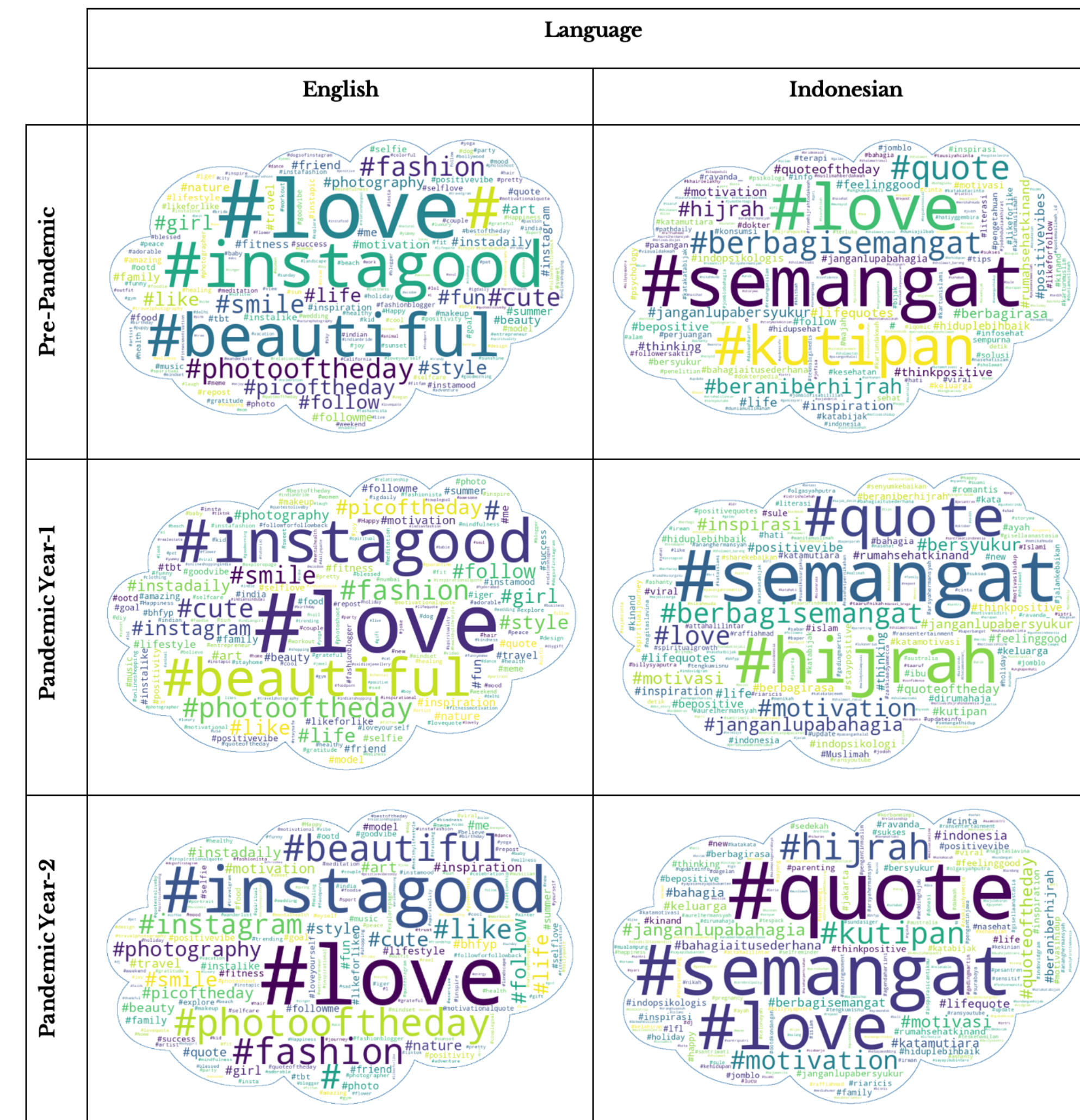
Source: *Firmansyah & Rani, 2023.*

4. Findings

Figure 2
The Top-30 Associated Hashtags with "Happiness" Hashtags in Indonesian (date: March 11, 2020 - March 10, 2021)

- Using word cloud visualization, we discovered that the **subjective happiness of active Instagram users** between the pre-pandemic and the COVID-19 pandemic periods **did not vary significantly**.
- In the **Indonesian language**, in the first year of the pandemic period, the hashtag **"#dirumahaja"** (meaning "stay at home") often appeared together with the "happiness" hashtags.

5. Conclusions

- The analysis shows that **happiness themes have been relatively similar** across time periods and languages.
- This study **contributes** to a better understanding of how happiness and its associated themes have fluctuated during the COVID-19 pandemic by analyzing the usage of happiness hashtags on Instagram as an indicator of user happiness.

References

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