

Research Article

Creativity, Curiosity, Open Mindedness, Love of Learning, and Perspective Character Strengths in Students' Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to describe in depth the influence of the character strengths of creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning, and perspective on students' wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study used a qualitative approach and was phenomenological research. Participants were students of higher education who lived in the city of Yogyakarta. The data were collected using an open-ended semi-structured questionnaire and through in-depth interviews. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis techniques. The initial results from the preliminary research were validated through triangulation. The findings indicated that the presence of the character strengths of creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning, and perspective influenced students' happiness during their studying.

Keywords: character strengths, creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning, perspective, wellbeing, student, COVID-19 pandemic era

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued since it first occurred in Wuhan in 2019 [1]. Even in the second half of 2021 there has been a very large wave of distribution, both in Indonesia and throughout the world (India, Singapore, Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused various problems in various aspects of human life. These problems include religious, economic, social, political, lifestyle, mental health and cultural practices [2].

In particular, in the field of education, this pandemic has created mental health problems for stakeholders in education and teaching. One of the stakeholders most constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic during the education and learning process is students. In this case, many mental health problems during online learning lead to the need for understanding student happiness while studying online in the COVID-19 era. Understanding the happiness of students studying in college while studying online in

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the COVID-19 era is important to consider because it is viewed from developmental psychology. They are at the crossroads between late adolescence and early adulthood who have independence in learning. This demand raises a lot of mental health dynamics in adapting successfully to the learning process in higher education.

One of the psychological concepts that can help students develop learning behavior and happiness is the strength of character. In the context of studying in higher education, there are 5 character strengths that are considered quite relevant to help students' learning behavior and happiness, namely creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning, and perspective. The problem statement of the research can be formulated as follows: What are the description of the meaning of 5 character strengths in students happiness while studying in the learning behaviour in the era pandemic?

Based on the rationale that has been described, the purpose of this study is to describe in depth the existence of 5 character strengths in student happiness while studying in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Literature Review

In the context of students facing learning difficulties to be happy, it can be viewed from the strength of character based on a positive psychological perspective. Strength of character is suspected to help the development of happiness in a person. Character strengths can be defined as morally valued personality traits that exist on a continuum. They are reflected in thoughts, feelings, and behavior and are mechanisms by which virtues can be expressed [3]. According to the Values in Action (VIA) classification, there are 24 character strengths. The 24 character strengths are then classified into 6 core virtues [4].

The description of the 6 classifications of the main virtues (core virtues) with the derivatives of 24 character strengths are as follows Virtue I. Wisdom and knowledge: cognitive strengths that comprise the acquisition and use of knowledge; Virtue II. Courage: emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal; Virtue III. Humanity: interpersonal strengths that comprise "tending and befriending" others; Virtue IV. Justice: civic strengths that underlie healthy community life; Virtue V. Temperance: strengths that protect against excess.; Virtue VI. Transcendence: strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning [4].

Among the 6 (kebajikan inti) that have been described, it can be seen that the virtues of wisdom and knowledge are the most relevant to the case of student happiness in

learning in the pandemic era. In this case, wisdom and knowledge related to cognitive strength in obtaining and utilizing knowledge is in accordance with learning activities that have the final result of acquiring and using knowledge

In the virtue of wisdom and knowledge, there are five character strengths that are quite relevant in explaining the state of learning behavior and student happiness while studying in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 5 character strengths are creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning, and perspective. These 5 strengths of character are useful in describing student learning behavior in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Method

The purpose of this research was to explore the existence of 5 character strengths (creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning, and perspective) in students' wellbeing in Yogyakarta. Approach of the research was a qualitative research approach. The interpretive qualitative research is a research method studying subjective meaning of participants' world about an object researched [5].

The design of the research was a phenomenological research. The phenomenological research is a model in qualitative research with description of one or more particular individuals' consciousness and experience of a phenomenon. The phenomena in this research is students' character strengths of creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning, and perspective related to wellbeing in learning during pandemic COVID-19. Participants or subjects of the research were 6 students from in Yogyakarta city. There are 3 female students and 3 male students. The selected students were between 18 until 23 years old. The students had a knowledge and an experience about learning during COVID-19 pandemic.

The data were collected by an open-ended semi-structured questionnaire and in-depth interview. Through the instruments, the researchers can acquire all information needed about 5 character strengths from their perspective. The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis technique focusing on identifiable theme and patterns of cognitive, affective, and behavior. The thematic analysis method is an analysis method in qualitative research which emphasizes building and examining patterns of meaning (themes) within data. The steps of in the thematic analysis technique can be listed: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. As results of the research was obtained, a conclusion was validated by triangulation. Triangulation is one of the validation method in qualitative

research. Triangulation in this research conducted with comparing themes that emerged from many subjects.

4. Results and Discussion

This finding of the study can be seen as a case study but it supports about the existence of some relevant research at the global level [3]. Students stated that studying online during the COVID-19 pandemic encountered many learning problems. These learning problems include communication difficulties, deficiencies in direct interpersonal relationships, boredom, fatigue, unpredictable schedule changes, and stress. In dealing with these problems they try to solve problems and develop resilience. Resilience is created when they are able to deal with problems successfully [6]. In this case the problem solving is through the search for learning references from internet sources, using applications that make it easier, and alternative learning methods. This psychological response is quite helpful for the mental health and happiness of the students

There were 5 themes obtained in the research: creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning, and perspective. The existing themes derived and determined from the theory which is developed by Peterson & Seligman [3]. Regarding the dimension of creativity, the students stated that new knowledge as a result of creativity can be used to solve learning problems and even problems in life. New knowledge as a problem-solving instrument can help them be happier while studying during a pandemic. They put forward several learning alternatives so that learning becomes more effective and efficient, such as the strategy of searching for lecture materials more broadly through the internet and the suggestion of blended learning rather than just online learning.

Their curiosity regarding learning materials is also quite developed. This new knowledge is needed not only in the context of formal education but also for real life outside campus. This new knowledge can be used to survive in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic which has implications for the development of happiness. The new knowledge, for example, is insight into a healthy lifestyle and maintaining cleanliness.

Learning in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic causes them to be more open in thinking than studying in the normal era. This happens because learning barriers in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic cause them to try to find solutions to problems so they can enjoy the learning process. They stated that in the era of the pandemic, open mindedness as the basis for critical thinking is very necessary in learning. Apart from being personal, this openness can be seen in the phenomenon of the application of discussions during the learning process with other students and lecturers.

The strength of the love of learning character can be seen in the phenomenon of students facing many difficulties in learning in the pandemic era but they still strive to optimally acquire new skills, new topics, and new knowledge. They stated that sometimes the learning process did not run effectively, but they kept trying and remained grateful for gaining new knowledge within the various limitations of online learning. Gratitude makes an important contribution to one's happiness [6].

Students also stated that in studying they also exchanged advice and other assistance regarding the content of lecture materials and healthy behavior to prevent the spread of the corona virus. This exchange of perspectives helps develop happiness while living life in the pandemic era. This means that the strength of the perspective dimension character provides support for solving learning problems and other life problems. Because the creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning, and perspective as a part of wisdom and knowledge virtue supported to students' activity studying in pandemic era in acquisition and use of knowledge [4].

Based on the existence of 5 dimensions of character strength in students, it can be concluded that students have character strengths of creativity, curiosity, open mindedness, love of learning, and perspective in student happiness while studying in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The characters enhanced the students' cognition, affective, and behaviour during studying in the pandemic so the students' wellbeing increased. 5 character strengths which are included in the classification of the main virtues of happiness (wisdom) and knowledge help students develop happiness within themselves [7].

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