

# University Students' Coping Strategies in Blended Learning after The Pandemic COVID 19

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**Abstract:** After the COVID 19 pandemic, in some universities, learning methods returned to offline methods gradually. Starting with the use of blended learning methods. But this situation makes students need to adapt again. One of the factors that support the success of this adaptation is the pattern of coping strategies developed by students. This article aims to describe the patterns of the universities students' coping strategies during this blended learning. Therefore interviews were conducted with six students who took part in this mixed lecture. From the exploration results obtained an overview of the three patterns of coping strategies that were formed in these students. The first pattern is students who have negative perceptions of the learning process but fail to do coping because they fail to do Accepting responsibility; while the second are those who have succeeded in overcoming emotional-oriented stress by carrying out Accepting responsibility and Positive reappraisal as well as problem-oriented coping by carrying out Planful problem solving and; third are students who have positive perceptions but also face problems in the middle of the lecture process, they are able to do emotion-oriented stress coping by doing Accepting responsibility and Positive reappraisal.

**Keywords:** Blended Learning, Coping Strategies, Post Pandemic COVID-19, Universities Student.

## Introduction

Indonesia began to establish the new normal for the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2021. And since then, teaching and learning activities which have been carried out online for two years have gradually returned to using offline teaching and learning methods. However, this is not done directly. Offline lectures are carried out in stages by starting lectures with the blended method, which combines online teaching and learning methods with offline methods. This method has been introduced a long time ago. Several researchers have published in several studies regarding the application of this method.

The blended learning method basically offers alternative learning methods that can effectively reduce the time and place limitations of study

participants (Abdullah 2018). This is because when the online method is used it can be done even though the instructor and students/students are not in the same place. While the online method can still be done when it requires direct interaction or in a practicum learning process. However, this method is not yet familiar in the world of Indonesian education.

At the beginning of the COVID 19 Pandemic, when all lines of education were "forced" to carry out activities online, it turned out that this caused many problems and obstacles. At that time, online lectures were considered difficult because in terms of infrastructure and human resources, there were still many limitations. Some of these obstacles include limited infrastructure and human resources that are not optimal in supporting the changes in the education system that are occurring

(Basar 2021). This obstacle also causes the teaching and learning process to cause psychological disturbances such as increasing levels of psychological disorders such as stress, anxiety, and mood disorders among students (Hasanah et al. 2020; Hazim, Fihayati, and Rezania 2021; Pawicara and Conilie 2020; Rahmajati 2021; Sari 2020).

Recovery, which eventually began to slowly return to the offline method with the application of the blended method, was not without other constraints either. Every change that occurs in an individual will cause tension and be considered a "threat" that activates the stress response (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Stress is a natural mechanism that will happen to someone who is experiencing change. One theory that explains the mechanism of this stress response is the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) (Folkman 2013; Holahan, Ragan, and Moos 2017; Rice 2012). This stress response mechanism has three main stages, namely the alarm stage, the resistance stage, and the exhaustion stage. At the alarm stage a person shows a spontaneous response according to the intensity of the stressor and the individual's perception of the stressor. At this stage, generally a person will experience a decrease in psychological power and increased vigilance like facing a danger. Then in the second stage a person begins to use all the power he has both physically and psychologically to return the condition to a stable condition or homeostatic condition. It is in this second phase that a person will carry out a coping mechanism. When he succeeds in coping, he will return to a balanced state, however, when he fails to cope, he will enter the third phase, namely stage exhaustion. In this exhaustion phase a person experiences exhaustion both physically and psychologically. It is in this final phase that a person has the potential to experience stress or even distress.

From the GAS mechanism we know that coping mechanism is very important so that the stress he faces does not increase during the distress phase. Likewise with the adaptation period in blended lectures after the COVID 19 Pandemic. When a student succeeds in coping, he will succeed in adapting to changes in existing learning methods. Coping strategies are behavioral and cognitive tactics used to manage crises, conditions, and demands that are appraised as distressing (Carr and Pudrovska 2007). The coping process approach argues that coping is responsive to both environmental demands and personal factors such as values and beliefs. As such, coping strategies are flexible and unfold over time, either in response to changing appraisals or as a function of developmental processes (Aldwin and Yancura 2004; Lazarus and Folkman 1984). There are many different conceptualizations of coping strategies, but the five general types of coping strategies are problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, social support, religious coping, and meaning making (Aldwin and Yancura 2004; Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Dubow and Rubinlicht 2011). but, in this research, we use the two types of coping strategies are problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping.

Problem-focused coping, also called instrumental action, encompasses behaviors and cognitions aimed at solving the problem, such as seeking information, taking direct action, or breaking the problem down into more manageable pieces, a strategy referred to as "chunking." Sometimes, delaying or suppressing action can be a useful problem-focused strategy. For example, purposefully delaying a direct confrontation with someone may lead to a more rapid solution to a problem than acting in anger (Aldwin and Yancura 2004; Dubow and Rubinlicht 2011; Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Emotion-focused coping includes a wide range of strategies that are directed toward managing one's emotional

response to the problem. Some examples are avoidance, withdrawal, expressing emotion, and the use of substances such as alcohol or food. As might be expected, avoidance strategies are often associated with poor outcomes, but other emotion-focused strategies, such as expressing emotion through journals or writing, may be associated with positive outcomes (Aldwin and Yancura 2004; Folkman 2013; Lazarus and Folkman 1984).

After the COVID 19 pandemic, in some universities, learning methods returned to offline methods gradually. Starting with the use of blended learning methods. The transition phase was the most stressful as it created insecurity condition and was handled with insufficient information, consultation, and support (Smollan 2015). But this situation also makes students need to adapt again. One of the factors that support the success of this adaptation is the pattern of coping strategies developed by students. This article aims to describe the patterns of the university students' coping strategies during this blended learning.

## Materials and Methods

### Study area

This research involved 6 students who had previously been selected from 50 students from three universities in Kudus Regency. From these 50 people, an initial survey was carried out which aimed to get an overview of students' initial perceptions regarding the application of the blended learning method in their lectures in early 2022. The initial survey produced an overview of three types of responses in the form of statements regarding the problems they encountered during the teaching and learning period. The three types of responses are: "encountered obstacles during blended learning", "sometimes encounters obstacles", and "doesn't feel encountered obstacles at all". Based on these three responses, two

informants were selected for each response category.

### Procedures

After screening to get 6 students as the main informants, interviews were then conducted using the in-depth structure interview method. The aspects that were interviewed were initial responses regarding the blended learning method, the obstacles encountered and how to overcome the obstacles encountered.

### Data analysis

The method of analysis used was coding and followed by categorization based on three interview aspects and conclusions drawn from each group of respondents.

## Results and Discussion

Based on the results of interviews with 6 students according to their perception of the learning system using the blended method, three groups of responses and dynamics of coping strategies were obtained from each of these student categories.

### Students who stated that they "encountered obstacles during blended learning".

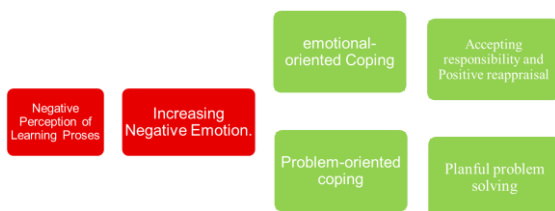


**Figure 1.** The dynamics of coping mechanisms in students that they experienced problems during learning with the Blended learning method.

The first pattern is the students who stated that they "encountered obstacles during blended learning" and they have negative perceptions of the learning process but fail to do coping because they fail to do Accepting responsibility. There are similarities between the two respondents, where they feel they are experiencing problems in the lecture process. They feel that they often feel bored

and tired when attending lectures due to activities that coincide with lectures, especially when lectures are in offline sessions. Their habit in the past, where they could take lectures online together with other jobs, made them overwhelmed by this blended system. This is what gives rise to negative perceptions of this blended learning system, resulting in increasing negative feelings such as feelings of boredom, laziness, or disappointment. So that the tendency of coping that they do is emotional oriented coping, such as looking for diversions and other activities so that this can restore their mood. However, the method they did was not fully successful because when they returned to class and carried out the teaching and learning process, these negative feelings reappeared.

#### Students who stated that "sometimes encounters obstacles" during blended learning.



**Figure 2.** The dynamics of coping mechanisms in Students who stated that "sometimes encounters obstacles" during blended learning

The second are those students who stated that "sometimes encounters obstacles" during blended learning and they have negative perceptions of the learning process, but they succeeded in overcoming emotional-oriented stress by carrying out Accepting responsibility and Positive reappraisal as well as problem-oriented coping by carrying out Planful problem solving. The two respondents felt that they only occasionally encountered problems in the lecture process. However, at the beginning of the lecture period, they felt that the most disturbing thing was when there was a change in method from offline to

online, this made their mood tend to change, especially because it disrupted the rhythm of activities they could normally do together with online lectures. They immediately overcome these negative feelings or moods by improving their mood with two things. The first way is to reduce emotions by calming down and accepting that the changes that have occurred have become a part of their choice to go to college. While the second way is to rearrange their schedule of activities, adjusting to the lecture method that was used at that time.

#### Students who stated that they "doesn't feel encountered obstacles at all during blended learning".



#### learning".

**Figure 3.** The dynamics of coping mechanisms in students that "doesn't feel encountered obstacles at all during blended learning".

The Third are students who stated that they "doesn't feel encountered obstacles at all during blended learning" and have positive perceptions but also face problems in the middle of the lecture process, they can do emotion-oriented stress coping by doing Accepting responsibility and Positive reappraisal. Both respondents felt they did not experience problems in the lecture process. However, at the beginning of the lecture period, they felt disappointed because they found things that were not as expected. This is partly because they did not expect that the lecture this time was more dynamic than the online and offline methods. The dynamic in question is that there are two methods that are used interchangeably and each change of method they need to readjust themselves, this makes their mood tend. They immediately overcome these negative feelings or moods by improving their mood. The thing they

do to reduce these emotions is accept the consequence that the lecture process is not easy so that they will always encounter problems. In addition, they also practice positive reappraisal by motivating themselves by remembering the main goals of college and the sacrifices of their parents in paying for college.

### Discussion

Any changes that occur in the social environment, especially those that occur globally, will certainly also affect changes in the learning system as a form of adjustment to the demands of existing changes. one of which is the implementation of a blended learning system at the university level, which is a response to the changing conditions of the Covid 19 Pandemic which is heading towards the endemic period of covid-19. The changes that occur also cause an adjustment response from students in the form of a coping response to these changes. In this study, it can be mapped into three forms of coping dynamics.

The first pattern is students who have negative perceptions of the learning process but fail to do coping because they fail to do Accepting responsibility. Someone who fails to do coping is strongly influenced by his perception of changes that occur. Person who can't do coping to his problems happened because they are didn't think would work, but at least "I was doing something"; that they have expressed anger to the person (s) who cause the problem; that they sometimes shop a big chance or do something very risky to solve the problem; and that they sometimes stood their ground and fought for what "I Wanted" (Yazon, Ang-Manaig, and Tesoro 2018).

However, the second respondent was successful in carrying out a coping mechanism. The second respondent are those who have succeeded in overcoming emotional-oriented stress by carrying out Accepting responsibility and Positive reappraisal as well as problem-oriented coping by

carrying out Planful problem solving. Individuals who succeed reduce their stress are more likely to use Restraint as a coping strategy, all of which suggest that in the context of a personal problem, individuals may be more likely to recognize that any solution will take time to solve, perhaps requiring "new thinking" (Explorer style), help from others (External style), and "hard" choices to be made (a Task-oriented decision-making style) as problem-oriented coping (Maghan 2017). Another research found 61.9% of Psychology Students Class of 2019 Andalas University when studying online, most of them carried out stress coping strategies in the form of emotional focused coping. The stress coping strategies of some of the Psychology students of class 19, Andalas University (51.2%), were in the quite good category (Purna 2020). So that someone who does emotional focused coping can succeed in doing this coping when they focus on forming new emotions related to changing environmental conditions.

Whereas in the last group of respondents or the third are students who have positive perceptions but also face problems in the middle of the lecture process, they can do emotion-oriented stress coping by doing Accepting responsibility and Positive appreciation. In this group a person tends to have self-compassionate. Self-compassionate people tend to rely heavily on positive cognitive restructuring and less so on avoidance and escape but do not appear to differ from less self-compassionate people in the degree to which they cope through problem-solving or distraction. And it relates to their good coping strategies (Allen and Leary 2010).

In this regard, students who are dealing with changes in the learning system, which in this case is the blended learning method, tend to develop two forms of stress coping mechanisms, emotional focused coping, and problem-oriented coping. However, the possibility of success for these students in carrying out these coping mechanisms is their ability to accept new and changing

responsibilities. But when they focus on their desire to remain in the old way of learning, then the stressful conditions caused by this change in learning methods. In addition, one of the studies corroborating these findings shows that, Students in higher education institutes are at risk of mental consequences due to COVID-19 but by finding a healthier coping system, increasing the availability of support within the family and community, as well as being active engaging in beneficial activities students may be able to alleviate general negative emotions and become individuals who are more resilient (Kaur et al. 2022; Rahmajati et al. 2022).

### Conclusions

From the exploration results obtained an overview of the three patterns of coping strategies that were formed in these six students. The first pattern is students who have negative perceptions of the learning process but fail to do coping because they failed to do emotional-oriented coping, they failed accepting responsibility. While the second are those who have succeeded in overcoming emotional-oriented coping by carrying out Accepting responsibility and Positive reappraisal as well as problem-oriented coping by carrying out Planful problem solving and the third are students who have positive perceptions but also face problems in the middle of the lecture process, they are able to do emotion-oriented stress coping by doing Accepting responsibility and Positive reappraisal. the possibility of the success of these students in carrying out these coping mechanisms is, their ability to accept new and changing responsibilities that exist.

The limitation of this study is we didn't do the other type of coping strategies analyses like social support coping, religious coping, and meaning making.

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