



# Coping Strategies in Improving Happiness Among Higher Education Students in Indonesia

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**Abstract.** Students need to be happy while doing their study in order to get good achievement. However, on the other hand, individuals have problems related to happiness. This can be seen from several research results which state that in general individuals have a moderate level of happiness. Based on previous studies, coping strategies is one of the factors of happiness. Therefore, this study aims to determine the relationship between happiness and coping strategies among students. The subjects in this study are 253 students in Yogyakarta (53 or 20.9% are male and 200 or 79.1% are female). They were selected by using convenience sampling. The methods of this current research is quantitative method using survey for the data collection technique. The online questionnaire consisted of Subjective Happiness Scale and Coping Strategy Inventory distributed using to students through WhatsApp short messages. Pearson Correlation was employed to analyze the data. The results of this study indicated that there is a significant relationship between happiness and coping strategies specifically problem focused coping among students with a significance score of 0.045 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This research can contribute to overcome problems related to happiness among higher education students. Students can apply problem focused coping in solving their problems to be happier.

**Keywords:** happiness · higher education student · coping strategies

## 1 Introduction

Happiness is a very important thing for life, including student. Happy individuals will tend to be more productive. In addition, happy people tend to be more active in achieving life goals, are better able to control their environment, are more optimistic, and have more positive social relationships [1]. This opinion is also in line with what was stated that happy people tend to succeed more easily than unhappy people [2]. However, on the other hand, individuals have problems related to happiness. This can be seen from several research results which state that in general individuals have moderate levels of happiness. Not a student except as the subject of this research.

During pandemic Covid-19, some students might feel study loss, pressure of self-study, and uncertainty about future study continuation, students were more become tense, anxious, and had a fear of infection. Kumar et al. [3] study put effort into examining the effective and ineffective ways to cope with stressful life events and psychological

wellbeing approaches used by male and female science students of the Central University of Punjab, India, belonging to urban and rural areas. The present study's findings revealed that urban students experienced more stress than rural students and used better Humor to mitigate tension, anxiety, and depression caused due to the outbreak of the second wave of Covid-19 [3]. This study showed that coping strategy that used by student was related to happiness.

Other studies have shown that when someone ignores a problem, it represents an escape from the problem. When people are unable to deal with their problems, they become sad and depressed [4]. The negative correlation between escape-avoidance coping styles and well-being illustrates this point. Happier people can be expected to show more self-control and think more about solving problems. They are responsible people. They may use avoidance-avoidance style coping strategies less frequently [4].

## 1.1 Happiness

The word "happiness" is used in many different ways It's a broad term that encompasses all good things. In this sense, it is often used synonymously with terms such as 'well-being' and 'quality of life', implying both individual and societal well-being. This usage of the word suggests that there is an ultimate good and masks the differences in interests between individuals and societies. Moreover, it suggests that all benefits can be summed up in a clear scale, but it is not. The term is just an umbrella term for different ideas of what is good [5]. Overall happiness is the degree to which an individual perceives their overall quality of life as positive overall. In other words, how much you love the life you are leading.

The concept of happiness (or subjective well-being or welfare) is subjective ("hedonic" in the philosophical sense) and not as attitude-based as the concept of life satisfaction It's what you actually feel good about, regardless of whether you're watching it (and minus the bad feelings to get "pure happiness"). Some authors define happiness or subjective well-being as including attitudinal aspects [6].

## 1.2 Coping Strategy

Lazarus and Folkman [7] define coping as a constant change in cognitive and behavioral as an attempt to cope with specific demands from external and internal which can be assessed from the many or not the resources owned by each individual. Belal et al. [7] define coping strategies as ways that individuals, groups or organizations use to minimize the impact of stress. Breakwell [7] says that coping strategies are "any activity, in thought or behavior, which has the aim of eliminating or modifying threats to identity".

Sarafino [7] states that coping is a process carried out by individuals in managing the distance between needs and resources when experiencing feelings of stress. Coping is a way to justify or dominate a problem. Coping also helps individuals in changing perceptions of inappropriate thoughts, to tolerate or accept threats and dangers, to escape, or to avoid the situation.

Folkman & Lazarus [8] divided coping strategies into problem-focused coping strategy (refer to direct activities to modifying the stressor) and emotion-focused coping strategy (refer to regulating emotional tension and arousal). The other coping strategies

fall into these two subtypes. But in real life these two strategies are not the only types of coping. We use a lot of other methods in dealing with difficult situations for example, "maintain favorable morale under stress, sustain or restore positive self-regard, and taking a break from chronic or recurrent demands that are stressful in order to restore our commitment" [8].

Lazarus and Folkman [4] discussed coping methods, including problem-focused and emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping works to change the source of psychological pressure and solve the problem. This type of coping may attempt cognitive assessment, evidence analysis, or identification of the root cause of the problem. The emphasis is on working directly with the source. Emotion-focused coping focuses on the underlying emotion of treatment. It is about mitigating or dealing with disruptive situations. People typically use both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies in stressful situations. Using problem-focused coping in controllable situations is better than emotion-focused coping. Emotion-focused coping is superior to problem-focused coping in situations that people have no control over. Perhaps people believe that if their attempts make sense, they will succeed in controllable circumstances. A low sense of control increases disturbing emotions [4].

Problem-focused coping is an approach that leads to a tendency to reduce sources of pressure or increase resources [7]. Taylor's perception [7] defines problem-focused coping as problem-focused coping behavior, how to solve problems or do something to reduce the source of the problem, use it to eliminate problems or perceived pressure by seeking solution directly.

Whatever the types or the number of coping strategies, these strategies depend on the individual's awareness of stressful events and the interaction between the characteristics of the individual and the characteristics of the situation [8].

## 2 Methodology

This research is a quantitative research using a survey. The stages that will be carried out are starting from the preparation of research measuring instruments, the cultural adaptation process by carrying out back-to-back translation of measuring instruments, validating research measuring instruments, conducting pilot studies, analyzing pilot study data, collecting research data, and analyzing research data. The subjects in this study were private university students in Jogjakarta. There are 4 scales that will be given to the subject, namely the happiness scale, the coping strategy scale, the resilience scale, and the academic stress scale. The scale given by the subject is an interval scale with 10 answer choices ranging from 1 to 10. Subjects are asked to fill in the scale for 15 to 20 min. All information collected will be anonymous and kept confidential. Data analysis was done using Product Moment Pearson Correlation.

### 2.1 Instruments

*The subjective happiness scale* [9] consists of 4 items. The score is obtained by adding up the overall score of the item divided by the total number of item, namely 4. This scale has high internal consistency, which is equal to 0.82. This scale was chosen based on

the reason that it was originally developed for college students as well as high school students [9]. This scale has high internal consistency.

*The Coping Strategy Inventory* (CSI) contains 40 items that were originally created by Cano Garcia [7] in 2007. Respondents were asked to answer 40 items that measure coping methods based on three strategies; focus on regulating emotions, focus on adaptive and maladaptive; and focus on emotions. Eight primary factors were identified as dimensions of coping (problem solving, cognitive readjustment, emotional expression, social support, avoidance of problems, hopeful thinking, self-criticism, and social distancing).

## 2.2 Subject of the Research

The subject of this research are 253 students in Yogyakarta (53 or 20.9% are male and 200 or 79.1% are female). The sample were obtained by implementing convenience sampling.

## 2.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of this research used Pearson Correlation. It is because the researchers want to measure the correlation between independent variable which is coping strategies and dependent variable which is happiness.

# 3 Result and Discussion

## 3.1 Result

This study has a subject of 253 people with the distribution of demographic data as follows.

From Table 1 it can be seen that in general the respondents in this study were female, aged between 16–19 years, and were taking lectures in semester 3.

From the results of the happiness scale, it can be concluded that in general students have a moderate level of happiness (Table 2).

Meanwhile, for the distribution of coping strategies, the number is not evenly distributed as follows (Table 3).

Because the distribution of scores for coping strategies is not evenly distributed, the researchers analyzed the correlation between happiness and coping strategies separately. The results of the correlation analysis are as follows:

From Table 4, it can be seen that there is a significant relationship between happiness and problem-focused coping, where the significance is 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This means that the ability to deal with pressure by focusing on problems can increase happiness in students, and vice versa, the lower the ability to cope with pressure by focusing on problems will reduce the level of happiness in students.

From Table 5, it can be seen that there is no relationship between happiness and emotion-focused coping, where the significance is 0.926 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This means that the ability to deal with pressure by focusing on emotion cannot increase happiness in students.

**Table 1.** Demographic data

|          |          |       |
|----------|----------|-------|
| Category |          | Total |
| Gender   | Male     | 50    |
|          | Female   | 200   |
| Age      | 16–19    | 144   |
|          | 20–23    | 105   |
|          | 24–27    | 2     |
|          | 28–31    | 1     |
|          | Above 32 | 1     |
| Semester | 1        | 64    |
|          | 2        | 0     |
|          | 3        | 145   |
|          | 4        | 0     |
|          | 5        | 27    |
|          | 6        | 1     |
|          | 7        | 15    |
|          | 8        | 0     |
|          | 9        | 1     |
| Category |          | Total |
| Gender   | Male     | 50    |
|          | Female   | 184   |
| Age      | 16–19    | 132   |
|          | 20–23    | 98    |
|          | 24–27    | 2     |
|          | 28–31    | 1     |
|          | Above 32 | 1     |
| Semester | 1        | 61    |
|          | 2        | 0     |
|          | 3        | 133   |
|          | 4        | 0     |
|          | 5        | 25    |
|          | 6        | 1     |
|          | 7        | 13    |
|          | 8        | 0     |
|          | 9        | 1     |

**Table 2.** Kategorisasi Happiness

| Category | Formula                    | Total |
|----------|----------------------------|-------|
| Low      | $X < M - 1SD$              | 27    |
| Middle   | $M - 1SD \leq X < M + 1SD$ | 176   |
| High     | $X \geq M + 1SD$           | 50    |
| Total    |                            | 253   |

**Table 3.** Coping Strategies

| Coping Strategy   | Score |
|---|-------|
| Problem-focused coping  | 233   |
| Emotion-focused coping  | 14    |
| Balance between problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping | 6     |
| Total   | 253   |

**Table 4.** Correlation Happiness and Problem-Focused Coping

| <b>Correlations</b>    |                     |           |                 |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------|
|                        |                     | Happiness | Coping Strategy |
| Happiness              | Pearson Correlation | 1         | .353**          |
|                        | Sig. (2-tailed)     |           | .000            |
|                        | N                   | 233       | 233             |
| Problem-Focused Coping | Pearson Correlation | .353**    | 1               |
|                        | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000      |                 |
|                        | N                   | 233       | 233             |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 3.2 Discussion

The result of the study mentioned that there is a positive relationship between coping strategies and happiness among higher education students. This means that the higher the coping strategies the higher the happiness level, and vice versa. The lower the coping strategies level, the lower the level of happiness.

Previous research stated that there is a relationship between coping strategies and the level of student happiness [10]. The results of research conducted by Joseashwinanand & Saraladevi [11] state that certain coping strategies, especially emotion based coping are correlated with happiness. In addition, Salavera et al. [10] states that coping strategies, especially unproductive coping, affect a person’s level of happiness.

**Table 5.** Correlation Happiness and Emotion-Focused Coping

| <b>Correlations</b>    |                     |           |                 |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------|
|                        |                     | Happiness | Coping Strategy |
| Happiness              | Pearson Correlation | 1         | .028            |
|                        | Sig. (2-tailed)     |           | .926            |
|                        | N                   | 14        | 14              |
| Emotion-Focused Coping | Pearson Correlation | .028      | 1               |
|                        | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .926      |                 |
|                        | N                   | 14        | 14              |

## 4 Conclusion

The result of the study mentioned that there is a positive relationship between coping strategies and happiness among higher education students. This means that the higher the coping strategies the higher the happiness level, and vice versa. The lower the coping strategies level, the lower the level of happiness.

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