# The Effectiveness of Strength-based Cognitive Behavior Approach in Psychoeducation to Improve College Students' Psychological Capital

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Abstract:- College Students are individuals who face challenges related to various academic and non-academic demands. The development of psychological capacities is thus important to help them overcome these challenges. Psychoeducation is one of the efforts to develop the positive capacity of students psychologically and needs to be done with an effective approach. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the strength-based cognitive behavior approach to develop psychological capital in students. This study is a quasi-experimental method using a pretest-posttest comparison group design. Due to the pandemic situation, psychoeducation in this study was carried out online. Pre-test, post-test and follow-up scores of psychological capital were measured and compared between experimental group and control group. Data was analyzed using mixed-design analysis of variance. The results showed that psychoeducation using a strengthbased cognitive behavior approach did not significantly increase the psychological capital of college students. The implications for the development of student psychological capital, the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are discussed.

**Keywords**—Psychoeducation; Strength-Based Cognitive Behavior Approach; Psychological Capital; College Students.

## I. INTRODUCTION

College students are faced with various challenges related to academic and non-academic demands. Viewed from the the stage of development, college students are in the early adult stage. Chikering (1993) states that there are seven developmental tasks that must be mastered by individuals in early adulthood, including building autonomy and interdependence, managing emotions, establishing and clarifying goals to be achieved, building mature interpersonal

relationships, developing intellectual, manual and emotional competencies, build personal integrity and self-identity. The unpreparedness of students to deal with situations and demands during their college life can be the basis for the emergence of various kinds of problems related to psychological disorders and mental health (Selvaraj, 2015).

Many studies on mental health in students have been carried out and have raised awareness about the importance of efforts to improve student mental health. Salimi et.al (2021) stated that mental health problems in students are issues that need attention. The development of students' psychological capacities is one of the many efforts made to support psychological growth and support mental health.

One of the constructs that has been widely researched and has predictive value on mental health is the psychological capital construct developed by Luthans (2002). This construct includes four components, namely Hope, Self-efficacy, Resilience and Optimism. The construct of psychological capital has been widely studied in the academic field. Research conducted by Riolli (2012) states that psychological capital serves as a factor that strengthens students in dealing with stress. Psychological capital is also correlated with college psychological well-being (Selvaraj, Psychological capital has a correlation with academic engagement and intrinsic motivation (Siu, Bakker, Jiang, 2014; Martinez et.al., 2019) and mental health (Selvaraj & Bhat, 2018; Javaheri, 2017). Selvaraj (2015) recommends the need for learning opportunities that focus on increasing the positive qualities of individuals in higher education. This is also in line with Javaheri's research (2017) which states that introductions and interventions to increase psychological capital for students can help students to have more effective problem-solving strategies. Previously, Luthans et.al. (2006) have developed a brief intervention that is proven to increase

psychological capital called the PsyCap Intervention (PCI). Luthans, et al. (2008) also conducted a web-based intervention to develop psychological capital in the workplace. PCI has also been tested in the academic field and has been shown to increase psychological capital in students (Russo & Stoykova, 2015; O'Reilly, 2016).

Psychoeducation is a form of activity that can be carried out individually or in groups aimed at developing effective attitudes and behavior in individuals. Psychoeducation focuses on structured activities and the application of certain skills and not only on the accumulation of knowledge (Drossel, 2008). Although not all students experience psychological consequences caused by the various challenges they face, most students can benefit from psychoeducational activities designed to teach life skills, problem-solving strategies, and self-understanding (Rageliene, 2014).

In this study, the cognitive-behavioral approach was combined with a strength-based approach that was oriented to individual strengths through group psychoeducation which aimed to increase the psychological capital of students. The integration of cognitive behavior and strength-based approaches was recommended in a study conducted by Suranata et.al. (2017) who have compared the use of cognitive behavior and strength-based approaches to increase resilience. The combination of a strength-based and cognitive behavioral approach is expected to produce an effective approach in psychoeducation to increase psychological capital in students through developing an optimistic perspective and avoiding thoughts that cause negative emotions (Riolli et.al., 2012) and focusing on individual strengths (Javaheri, 2017). The combination of strength-based and cognitive-behavioral approaches is expected to produce an effective approach in psychoeducation to increase psychological capital in students.

# II. LITERATURE REVIEW

# A. Psychological Capital

Psychological capital construct was developed by Luthans (2002). Psychological capital is related to "who you are" and "who you are becoming" which shows the developmental perspective of psychological capital (Luthans et.al., 2007). Although initially widely used in the industrial field, the psychological capital construct was also developed in the academic field. Luthans, et al (2007) define psychological capital as:

"The condition of positive individual development which is characterized by the following characteristics: (1) the presence of confidence (self-efficacy) in making efforts to complete the tasks or challenges faced; (2) have a positive (optimistic) attribution to the current success; (3) not easily give up in achieving goals and have hope (hope); (4) able to survive in adversity (resilience) and bounce back to achieve success."

Psychological capital contains 4 dimensions, namely efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience. Efficacy is defined as confidence to be able to complete challenging tasks. Optimism shows a positive attribution to the success achieved. Hope

shows persistence to achieve goals and the ability to set direction to achieve goals. Resilience shows the capacity and ability to return to normal situations. These four components when combined together will have a better synergistic effect to predict performance compared to each component separately (Luthans, et.al., 2007). Psychological capital has state-like characteristic, which means that psychological capital is open and can be developed through intervention.

#### B. Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation is not only used in the field of counseling, but is also used in various settings, such as in the fields of health, industry, and education. Psychoeducation can be done in one meeting or several meetings and can be done individually or in groups. Gladding (Brown, 2004) defines group psychoeducation as a group where the main goal is education about a psychological concept or topic. Brown (2004) also mentions that psychoeducation has two important components, namely educational component and counseling component. The educational component can be seen from the instructional principles applied, the material being delivered, and the role of the leader as an instructor. The educational component also includes information about strategies that participants need to know about certain topics so that individuals can use them as references in managing their life experiences. In educational component, the cognitive aspect is emphasized more than the affective aspect. The counseling component can be seen from activities such as group counseling, namely the interaction between group members in the form of group dynamics and group processes, and the leader's function as a facilitator. Compared to group counseling, group psychoeducation has a lower level of ambiguity regarding the material and expected learning outcomes (Brown, 2004). Psychoeducation primarily has a goal of preventing the onset of psychological disorders (Gladding, 1995 in Brown 2004). Brown (2004) also mentions that psychoeducational groups can be in the form of discussion groups or self-help groups. Brown mentions that one form of psychoeducational groups is educational/guidance groups. The aim of this group is to increase the knowledge of group members on topics related to development so that group members can overcome problems and crises encountered during development.

# C. Strength-based Cognitive Behavior Approach in Psychoeducation

Stength-based Cognitive Behavior approach in psychoeducation is based on the principles of CBT with an emphasis on individual strengths. The strength-based approach aims to understand and develop strengths, potentials, resources and protective factors that can positively change an individual's life (Hammond & Zimmerman, 2012). Jones-Smith (2014) describes that the essence of strength-based therapy is a mindset that is oriented to the strengths of the individual and not to his weaknesses. The cognitive behavior therapy approach, on the other hand, usually focuses on what needs to be improved. Bannink (2017, in Sugay 2020).

Strength-based approach is growing along with the development of science in the field of positive psychology, which is followed by research on human strength and factors

related to mental health and wellbeing (DelleFave & Fava, in Marrero et.al., 2016). Strength is defined as something that helps individuals to overcome challenges in life or something that makes life more satisfying for themselves and for others (Jones-Smith, 2014). The recognition and development of individual strengths occurs through a process of internal dialogue. This internal dialogue process occurs through a process of self-monitoring and self-assessing/judging and leading to the recognition or neglection of the strengths. Individual strengths are not fixed traits but grow from a dynamic process. The strengths-based approach has the advantages of focusing on strengths rather than problems, helping individuals to have a mindset that they have control over certain situations and do not place themselves as victims of the situation (Jones-smith, 2014).

Cognitive behavior approaches have been widely used in psychoeducation, including those related to resilience, irrational belief, and well-being (Sahin & Turk, 2021), mental health (Fathiyah et.al., 2020), and body image in adolescents (Mauludina et. al, 2012). The cognitive behavioral approach is widely used to help individuals understand maladaptive thoughts which often become the source of problems (Sugay 2020). In this study, the principles of the cognitive behavioral approach are used in the internal dialogue process carried out on individuals to identify their strengths and resources, especially to develop psychological capital. Jones (in Stoerkel, 2020) emphasizes that although the main focus is on individual strengths, this does not mean that weaknesses are ignored, but they need to be managed.

# III. METHOD

This study used a quasi-experimental method using a pretest-posttest comparison group design. This study used two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group received five psychoeducation

sessions with a strength-based cognitive behavior approach each with a duration of 50 minutes, while the control group did not receive any treatment.

There were 29 subjects participated in the experimental group and 25 subjects in the control group. Psychological capital is measured using the psychological capital scale compiled by Luthans et.al. (2012) which has been adapted into Bahasa Indonesia (Setyandari, et.al., 2019). Psychological capital scores for each group were measured on pre-test, posttest and follow-up. The collected data was then analyzed using mixed-design analysis of variance using SPSS (Software Statistical Package for The Social Sciences) program.

#### IV. RESULT

Data analysis was conducted using repeated measures anova. Test of normality was first performed on the data that had been collected. Data analysis showed the Shapiro-Wilk significance value was obtained with a p value > 0.05 (Sig = 0.290) for measurements in the pre-test, post-test and follow-up in the experimental and control groups. This means that the data for each group in this study is normally distributed and meets the requirements for normality. Furthermore, the assumption test of Mauchyl's test of sphericity showed the p value .> 0.05 (Sig = 0.559) and thus the Mauchly's test of sphericity is fulfilled.

Result of the data analysis showed the value of F=0.847~(p>0.05) as shown in Table 1. This means that there is no differences of psychological capital scores before, after and two weeks after attending sessions of psychoeducation. Thus the research hypothesis which states that there is an effect of time of measurement on increasing psychological capital is rejected. In other words, psychoeducation with strength-based cognitive behavior approach in this study did not increase students' psychological capital significantly.

Table 1. Test of Within Subjects

Source		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Sphericity Assumed	2	18.185	.166	.847
time	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.956	18.595	.166	.842
time	Huynh-Feldt	2.000	18.185	.166	.847
	Lower-bound	1.000	36.370	.166	.685
	Sphericity Assumed	2	26.444	.242	786
tima * anaum	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.956	27.041	.242	.781
time * group	Huynh-Feldt	2.000	26.444	.242	.786
	Lower-bound	1.000	52.888	.242	.625
	Sphericity Assumed	104	109.355		
Eman(times)	Greenhouse-Geisser	101.705	111.822		
Error(time)	Huynh-Feldt	104.000	109.355		
	Lower-bound	52.000	218.709		

The result of the study also indicated that test results of between-subjects effects showed the value of F=1.6 (p> 0.05) as shown in Table 2. It means that there is no differences of psychological capital between the experimental group and the control group. Thus the research hypothesis which states that

strength-based cognitive behavior approach in psychoeducation is effective to increase students' psychological capital is rejected in this study. Some factors that may have impact on this result were discussed.

Table 2. Test of Between Subjects Effects

Measure: psycap

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	1	1943785.594	7811.735	.000
grup	1	398.927	1.603	.211
Error	52	248.829		

# V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Cognitive behavior approach is combined with strengths approach which aims to increase students' psychological capital. Strength-based approach to cognitive behavior in psychoeducation uses the basic principles in the cognitive-behavioral approach by emphasizing individual's strengths.

In this study, it was found that the use of the strength-based cognitive behavior approach was not proven to be effective in increasing students' psychological capital. Several factors that influence the results of the study are discussed as followed. In this study, the identification of the individual strengths was only done through filling out questionnaires in a relatively short time, and was not explored in depth. It was also not followed by an emphasis on how these strengths are used by individuals. In this case, Wood (2010) mentions that research on the topic of individuals' strengths often only stops at identification, and is not followed by how to use these strengths.

The sessions of psychoeducation in this study were carried out online using synchronous mode, due to the pandemic situation. One of the difficulty in online sessions of psychoeducation experienced in this study was to create a cohesive atmosphere in the group and to build participant activity. Weinberg (2020) mentions that in online group interventions, it is important to build participants' involvement in the group. It is also important to increase activities that can help self-disclosure to compensate for the absence of physical interaction. In short, the difficulty of establishing interaction with participants in psychoeducational sessions became a challenge in this study. Limitations in building interactions in psychoeducational groups are very likely to have an impact on the achievement of activity goals. Regarding group intervention conducted online, Weinberg (2020) also stated that online group intervention is a new thing for now and therefore not many studies have been conducted to test its effectiveness. Weinberg added that one of the challenges that emerged in online groups was to build cohesiveness and alliances within the group. In this study, one of the efforts made to increase participants' involvement in psychoeducation was through Worksheets and Reflection Sheets which were given as independent assignments. Through Worksheets and Reflection Sheets, it is hoped that it will help participants to find the right context and meaning for themselves. Giving context is needed so that there is a connection between the information obtained in psychoeducation and that individual can apply what they have learned creatively, practically and critically in everyday life (Sabramowicz, 2016).

The worksheets used in this psychoeducation include the presentation of a problem that needs to be solved by the participants. The use of problems as a learning tool is widely

used and has been able to improve students' understanding, motivation, and a number of student skills (Overton, 2016). However, in this study, the purpose of giving worksheets and reflection sheets as independent assignments did not seem to have been achieved. Individual tasks that must be done independently requires the ability of self-regulated learning among the participants. If students lack of this ability, then it will be difficult to process the information they learned independently and to be able to reflect on their learning experiences. Students' self-regulated learning abilities are needed to achieve success despite various challenges they face in the online learning process (Dewi et.al., 2020).

In this study, the delivery of psychoeducational material on psychological capital was delivered using the lecture method and followed by question and answer session. During these process, many students did not showed high participation. This situation might relate to the use of the lecture method as the method delivery. This is in accordance with Pugsley's (2003) research which states that compared to the lecture method, students show more positive attitudes towards the use of experiential learning methods in lectures. This is also supported by research from Priharsanti et.al. (2020) which proves that the use of story telling media in psychoeducation can increase psychological capital for first year students.

# VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In this study, the strength-based cognitive behavior approach in psychoeducation was not proven to be effective in increasing psychological capital in college students. However, several factors in this study may have impact on the results of the study. The first factor is that psychoeducation in this study was carried out online due to the pandemic situation, so that interaction and atmosphere in the group were less cohesive than if it was done face-to-face. In addition, the use of the lecture method to deliver educational material on psychological capital did not seem to be able to increase motivation to involve actively psychoeducation sessions given. The use of Worksheets and Reflection Sheets, which were expected to increase students' involvement in psychoeducational activities, has not worked optimally. Other thing is that the use of strength-based approach should not only reached at the identification of strengths and need to be explored to how individuals can use them in their contexts especially to strengthen psychological capital. Future research on this topic may give more focus on the delivery method of psychoeducation using the same approach and to explore more on how to use individual strengths related to psychological capital according to their respective contexts.

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