

# STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS ON THEIR PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC LIVES DURING EARLY COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## ABSTRACT

Our world has been transformed dramatically by COVID-19 pandemic as it affected health, economy, politic, social, education, etc. The aim of this research is discovering students' reflections toward their personal and academic lives during early COVID-19 pandemic situations grounded on three zones, namely fear, learning, and growth zones. This descriptive qualitative survey research used questionnaires to gather the data from 187 freshmen in a university in Palembang. The data were analyzed and interpreted by using a thematic analysis consisting of six steps, namely (1) familiarizing with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. The research results show that students reflected on their personal and academic life differently when it was reflected based on the three zones. There were also some factors influencing the reflection, namely the transition between senior high school and university and the typically online learning process demanding autonomous learning. Finally, the research suggests that, alongside the society, students might learn how to move gradually one zone to another in order to overcome this global crisis. Therefore, covid-19 pandemic should be perceived then as a lesson learnt.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic has shaken and even devastated the world we live in. Human nations from various parts of the world have become its living witnesses. We are also not only witnesses but also the ones feel the enormity of the losses that it causes. Many families experience the tragedy by losing their beloved family members. The number of tragedies might be starting to recede now, but that does not mean COVID-19 has disappeared from the face of the earth. The virus still exists and even has evolved. Further, COVID-19 affects the education system worldwide as schools and universities are closed to control the spread of the virus. Indeed, this closure brings difficulties for students, teachers, and parents, therefore, distance learning becomes a solution to continue the education system (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). However, humans with their intelligence were thankfully able to create mass-produced vaccines that can save the lives of many people. The number of individuals vaccinated has also increased rapidly as well (Kampf, 2021; McGuire, 2021; Subbarao, 2021; Syed et al, 2023). Despite that, this global tragedy happening in 2020 and two years after should not be forgotten. Instead, it should become a lesson that all of us should reflect on.

It is widely known that in late December 2019, a case of unidentified pneumonia was reported in Wuhan, Hubei Province, People's Republic of China (PRC). This fact has been confirmed by various articles

in journals and websites which are the sources of the analysis in this paper, for example Chan et al (2020), Fox (2020), Fisher et al (2020), Krishnan et al (2021), Li et al (2020). The World Health Organization (WHO), which is continuously monitoring and responding to this global pandemic, also confirms this fact (WHO, 2023; Lau et al, 2020). Since the beginning of the virus's outbreak, the WHO's website has been providing the Q&A (questions and answers) page that will be updated as quickly as possible regarding the information about COVID-19, how it spreads, and how it is affecting people worldwide. The WHO also officially names the disease COVID-19, in which CO stands for corona, VI stands for virus, and D stands for disease.

Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV' (UNICEF, n.d). In addition, the virus was also named 'Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2' (SARS-CoV-2) by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses. In other words, COVID-19 is the disease caused by a coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 (Cohen et al., 2022). On 31 December 2019, WHO first learned of this new virus through a report of a cluster of cases of so-called pneumonia in Wuhan, China. This information is also reported and confirmed by Brüssow (2020) and Pitlik (2020). According to Wang et al. (2020), designation of a formal name for the novel coronavirus and the disease it caused is conducive to communication in clinical and scientific research. It should be highlighted that the WHO declared the ongoing outbreak as a global public health emergency afterwards. As a result, every nation has to implement pandemic management strategy to deal with this crisis (Alwan et al, 2020; Hauser et al, 2020; Rothan & Byrareddy, 2020; Sutton et al, 2020), including travel restrictions (Chinazzi et al, 2020) and the involvement of religious communities (Lee et al, 2022a; Lee et al, 2022b; Li & Cao, 2022; Sisti et al, 2023).

Despite that, it is also believed that the pandemic represents a real breakthrough, in scientific publications, towards the objective of health information for all (Capocasa et al, 2022; Carnut et al, 2020; Koelle et al, 2022; Levin et al, 2020; Mallapaty, 2020; Msemburi et al, 2023; O'Driscoll et al, 2021; Wang et al, 2022). It can be acknowledged that after two years, our world has been transformed dramatically because of the impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic toward health, economy, politic, social, education, etc. (Beach et al, 2022; Hoffman et al, 2020; Kakaie et al, 2022; Luo et al, 2020; Meyerowitz-Katz, 2020; Swinnen et al, 2021).

The purpose of this research is to discover university students' reflections on their personal and academic lives during early COVID-19 pandemic situation grounded on three zones, namely fear zone, learning zone, and growth zone. The three zones are depicted in an image that has been circling on various social media during the pandemic crises. The title of the image used in this research was 'Who am I during COVID-19?' Some writers might vary the title depending on the objectives. Jackson (n.d) argues that the pandemic might be a good opportunity to reflect and think about how people are adapting to and dealing with this once in a century event. She proposes 'Who do I want to be during COVID-19?' as the title to reflect on. This kind of reflection is believed to ensure human beings that they are able to respond, react and change their mindsets as they gain more understanding of themselves and their environments. The writer states that the image could help people to understand who they want to be during this difficult situation and to recognize their behaviors.

A website called Bigthink, on 30 April 2020, released an article entitled '*Who do you want to be during COVID-19?*' The article, penned by Robby Berman, presents an image or visual representation that depicts the progression from fear to acquiring knowledge to personal growth. Berman (2020) acknowledges that this widely disseminated image was created by Celina Canales, a host of a podcast and a journalist. During a late evening, while grappling with anxiety regarding the health of her son who has a compromised immune system and her separated parents, Canales conceived this concept. The graphic effectively illustrates the three stages that individuals experience during the COVID-19 pandemic: fear, education, and personal development. It serves as a source of solace in response to the feelings of helplessness. Canales subsequently shared her circular diagram on Instagram, deeply resonating with numerous individuals who longed to regain a sense of control amidst overwhelming uncertainty.

Based on the viral diagram circulating LinkedIn, Avelar (2020) argue that, upon entering the fifth week of adhering to social distancing measures amidst the pandemic, numerous individuals are devoting time to contemplate the circumstances. None could have predicted this unforeseen event. The notion of a pandemic is entirely new to a substantial portion of our populace. Many have been compelled to engage in introspection and seek resolutions to navigate the present conditions. Drawing inspiration from Canales' model, Avelar devised a method for managing his own internal state while providing guidance to his sales team amidst these arduous times. It is postulated that countless individuals have employed the viral roadmap or image to serve their respective intentions, particularly in reflecting upon the current situation.

The initial stage, referred to as the fear zone, is the point at which numerous individuals embark on this journey, and it is a phase where individuals may display impulsive behaviors. This stage is closely linked to the innate Fight, Flight, or Freeze responses of the human brain, in which our brain gives priority to immediate action over careful consideration. According to Jackson (n.d), based on her experiences, she observed this nationally during episodes of panic buying for groceries and even toilet paper, of all things. The

fear of the unknown compels people to desperately seek any available information, often causing them to overlook source verification and treat all information with equal importance, subsequently sharing it with others. By doing so, individuals unknowingly spread fear in order to foster a sense of unity in their anxieties. However, remaining in the fear zone is neither sustainable nor advisable. Therefore, where should individuals proceed from this point?

The second phase corresponds to the learning zone, a stage that typically occurs slightly later once circumstances begin to stabilize. During this phase, individuals' conduct becomes less impulsive and more thoughtful and deliberate. People gradually develop a heightened awareness of their own limitations, thereby reducing their concerns about maintaining complete control and enabling themselves to relinquish a certain degree of control. Individuals acquire the ability to respond with careful consideration rather than reacting impulsively in the present moment. Additionally, individuals become more discerning in their consumption of information, exercising moderation. The manifestation of patience, both towards oneself and others, becomes more apparent.

Moreover, the ultimate stage in this theory is the growth zone, in which individuals commence expanding their focus beyond themselves and towards the broader society. Individuals pose inquiries such as, "In what ways can I contribute and provide assistance to others?" or "Who is facing more significant challenges than I am, and how can my actions, even simple gestures such as expressing gratitude towards postal workers or garbage collectors, alleviate their burdens?" In the growth zone, individuals explore new hobbies or dedicate more time to preexisting ones. Their sense of urgency diminishes, allowing them to decelerate and embrace the slower, quieter, and more serene rhythm that the period of confinement can offer.

It seems that the viral diagram has enriched and encouraged society to reflect on their lives and struggles during these global crises. Even though many people might have alternated the roadmap, the main concept of three zones remains the same, as illustrated in *Gambar 1*.



Gambar 1. The viral diagram or roadmap

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

Referring to the widely circulated image or diagram, the researchers conducted this study during early COVID-19 pandemic. This research employed descriptive qualitative survey, by using questionnaire as its instrument. The validity of the instrument had been considered since it was adopted from the original diagram

as illustrated in *Gambar 1*. In addition, the researchers of this research were also considered as the human instruments. The questionnaire was distributed to all freshmen of a private university in Palembang, Indonesia. So, total sampling was employed in this research. The data collected from 187 participants were analyzed and interpreted meticulously by using thematic analysis.

This thematic analysis aiming to identify patterns or themes within qualitative data mainly involves six steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, the researchers are required to be *familiar with the data* by reading and re-reading the data from the participants. Secondly, it is necessary to *generate initial codes* in order to organize the data in a meaningful and systematic way. The next step is *searching for themes* which aims for capturing something significant or interesting about the data. The fourth step involves *reviewing themes* with the aims of reviewing, modifying, and developing the preliminary themes generated in the third step. After that, the researchers are required to *define and name themes* for identifying the core idea of each theme. Finally, each theme must be elaborated in the research report within the process of *producing the report*.

It should be highlighted here that there are endless ways to propose questions of participants in surveys. In this study, questions were classified as closed-ended and open-ended (free responses). The closed-ended questions were designed on a linear numeric scale. In this linear numeric scale, participants provided some numeric response to a question or statement. This method was facilitated by Google forms, which has a specific feature on linear numeric scale. During early pandemic, the use of Google forms was unavoidable because all lectures were conducted online.

To contextualize the study, the researchers adapted and slightly modified the title of the diagram into *'Who am I during COVID-19?'*. Based on the three zones, the researchers developed a linear numeric scale (1-5) in Google forms and then distributed to university students of the selected location via email and WhatsApp. The topics of questionnaire are demonstrated in the following table.

Tabel 1. 3 Zones in Google Forms

Zone	Question/Statement
Fear Zone	Getting mad easily
	Forwarding all messages received on social media
	Complaining frequently
	Spreading emotions related to fear and anger
	Panic buying (food, masks, medications)
Learning Zone	Recognizing many people try to do their best
	Evaluating info before spreading something false
	Becoming aware of the situation and thinking how to act
	Identifying my emotions
	Stopping compulsively consuming what hurts me (food)
	Stopping compulsively consuming what hurts me (news)
Growth Zone	Accepting reality
	Practicing quietude and patience
	Practicing relationship and creativity
	Looking for a way to adapt to new changes
	Keeping a happy emotional state and spreading hope
	Thanking and appreciating others
	Being empathetic with myself and with others
	Living in the present and focusing on the future
	Making talents available to those needing them
Thinking of others and seeing how to help them	

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

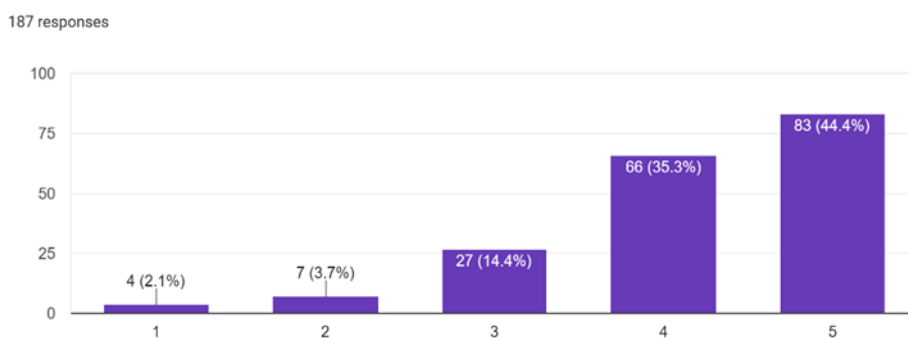
#### 3.1. Perception Based on Three Zones

This section is based on the result of closed-ended questionnaire. This finding demonstrates first students' reflection on their personal and academic lives when reflected on the basis of three zones. In order to easily present the results dan discuss them, this part will be divided into three sub-sections.

### 3.1.1. Fear Zone

Based on the five questions related to fear zone, the participants were asked about their attitude, perception, and experience during early COVID-19 Pandemic. The main question was *'Who am I during COVID-19'*. First of all, most of the participants state that they are on scale 3 (50,8%), scale 4 (28,9%), and scale 5 (11,2%) when they were asked whether they got mad easily during the pandemic. The higher the scale they obtain, the less mad they will be. Secondly, the response for the statement *'I forward all messages I receive'* from 108 students (57,8%) was a *'No.'* It shows that the students did not forward all messages that they received on their social media. Meanwhile, 19,8% and 16,16% of the participants state that they might not forward the messages that they receive on social media.

Furthermore, the third question, *'Do you complain frequently?'*, were dominantly answered on the scale 3 (48.7% or equal to 91 students). However, it can be noticed from the responses that the participants are likely to complain frequently because they are on the scale 4 and 5. In addition, in terms of spreading emotions related to fear and anger, most students respond that they would not spread their emotions of fear and anger because of the global pandemic. The following bar chart (*Gambar 2*) illustrates the answer.

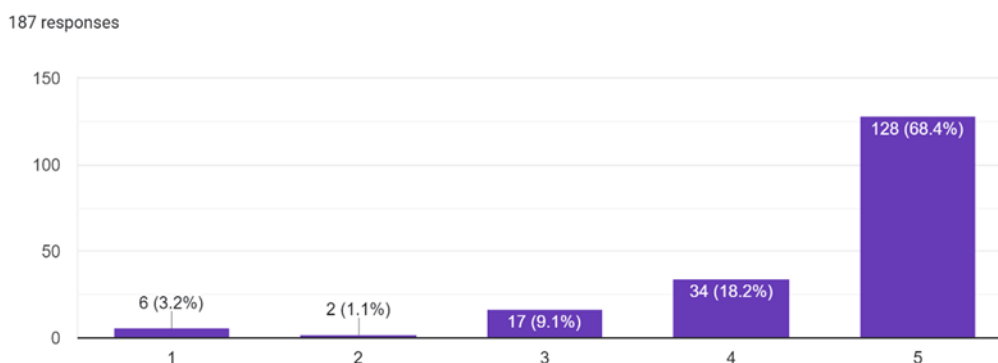


Gambar 2. Response to spreading emotions

Finally, the last question of the fear zone is *'I grab food, masks, medications, etc. that I do not need.'* 38 of 187 (20,3%) participants definitely state *'No'* regarding this panic buying. 25.1% of students stay on the scale 4 meaning that they would occasionally grab food, masks, medication etc. that they do not need actually. On the contrary, a relatively considerable number of students (40.1%) are on the middle position, that is, on the scale 3, implying that they are likely to grab food, masks, medications, etc. that they actually do not need. In other words, they would be on the position of panic buying.

### 3.1.2. Learning Zone

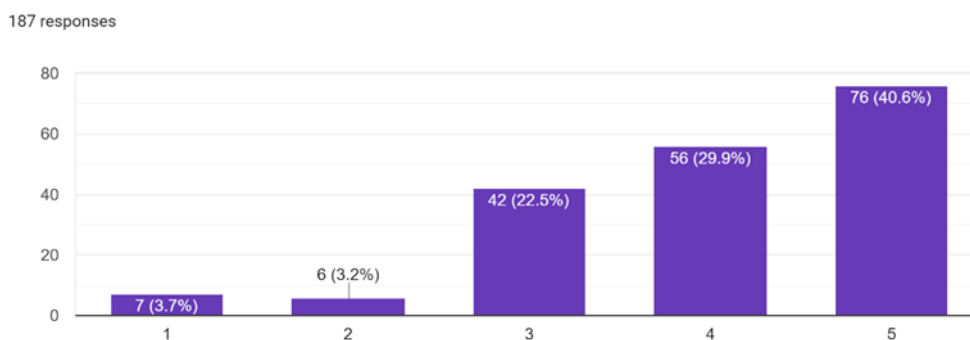
This learning zone is comprised of seven inquiries. *'I recognize that we are all trying to do our best'* is the first question. Evidently, the responses are quite intriguing as the majority (111 students or 59.4%) acknowledge that numerous individuals endeavor to perform at their best. This signifies that the participants possess awareness towards their surroundings and value their social lives. Secondly, do the students evaluate information before disseminating falsehoods? This inquiry is answered affirmatively, as depicted in Figure 3. Based on *Gambar 3*, it can be emphasized that the majority will assess information prior to spreading any falsehoods. This may contribute to the prevention of misinformation among individuals or society.



Gambar 3. Response to spreading hoax

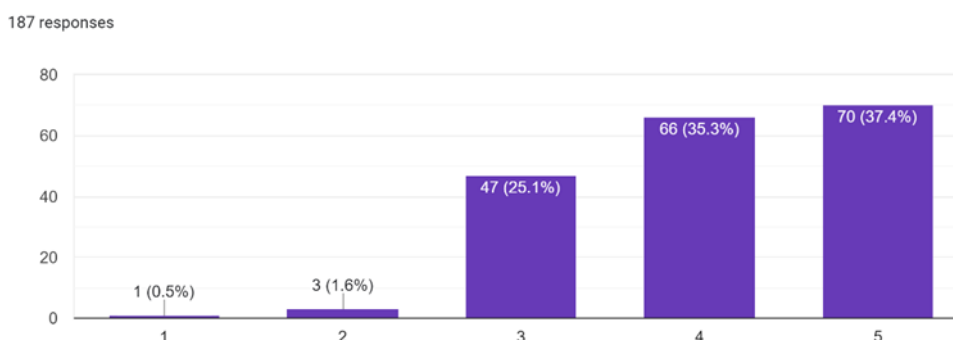
Furthermore, the participants were surveyed regarding their awareness of situations and their strategies for action. The responses confirm that the majority of participants are indeed aware of the prevailing pandemic conditions and contemplate methods to overcome them. Their responses are distributed across the following scales: 5 (36.9%), 4 (35.3%), and 3 (24.6%). This indicates that university students presumably acknowledge the circumstances and simultaneously contemplate appropriate actions or solutions. However, when asked about 'identifying their emotions,' the students primarily indicate a score of 4 (35.3%), with a slightly lower percentage (31.6%) selecting a score of 3. This implies that, while 24.1% of participants claim to be able to identify their emotions, a relatively significant number of students encounter difficulties in this task.

Regarding panic buying, the majority of students respond by refraining from compulsively consuming items that are harmful to them, particularly food. 33.2% of participants selected scale 1, whereas 24.1% selected scale 2, and 32.6% selected scale 3. Therefore, it appears that they strive to avoid self-inflicted harm resulting from panic buying. Next, do they stop compulsively consuming items that harm them due to information received from the news? It is well-known that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the circulation of news was highly rapid on a daily basis. However, the responses are surprisingly alleviating, as illustrated in *Gambar 4*. The respondents seem to limit their consumption of news, with 40.6% of them completely refraining from consuming news altogether.



Gambar 4. Response to stopping consuming news

Lastly, the statement included in this learning zone pertains to accepting reality. To be precise, the statement is formulated as 'I begin to relinquish control over things I cannot influence.' The results of the questionnaire indicate that the majority of students are inclined to accept the existence of the COVID-19 reality. 37.4% of answers fall into scale 5, 35.3% fall into scale 4, and 25.1% fall into scale 3, as demonstrated in *Gambar 5*. There are only a few respondents who seem unwilling to give up control over things they cannot influence. In fact, the reality of this pandemic catastrophe has shocked or even devastated numerous individuals. However, for the young generations who participated in this study, they appear to recognize the limitations of human beings and have begun accepting the things they cannot control.



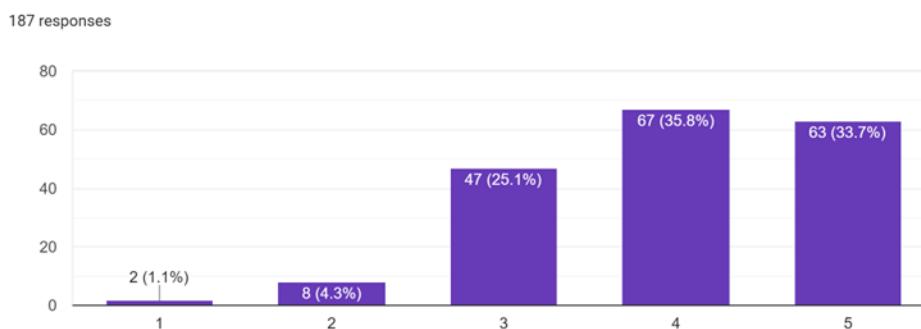
Gambar 5. Response to reality's acceptance

### 3.1.3. Growth Zone

For this final zone, the participants were provided with nine questions or statements to address. The initial statement pertains to the practice of quietude and patience. The predominant response falls within the range of scale 4 (37.45%), while 32.1% and 27.8% of participants opted for scale 5 and 3 respectively. These

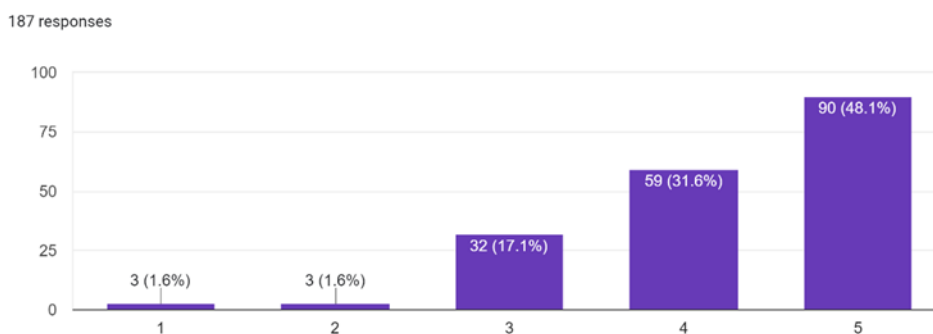
findings suggest that the majority of college students appear to engage in the practice of quietude and patience. Additionally, do they engage in the practice of relationship-building and creativity? This second query elicits a different response, as most individuals position themselves primarily on scale 3 (33.7%) and 4 (35.8%). This implies that a significant number of students do not seem particularly inclined towards cultivating relationships and fostering creativity. They may, in fact, prefer solitude and do not prioritize creative thinking.

Furthermore, when asked about their approach to adapting to new changes, a considerable portion of participants selected scale 1 (25.1%), 2 (32.6%), and 3 (32.6%). Despite scale 1 accounting for only a quarter of the responses, the majority of respondents display a tendency to actively seek ways to adapt to new changes. Moreover, the participants predominantly exhibit a positive emotional state and a propensity for spreading hope. This observation is illustrated in *Gambar 6* below. Evidently, most students maintain a state of happiness rather than unhappiness, and choose to instill hope rather than a sense of hopelessness. This is evident from the diagram, which indicates 35.8% (scale 4) and 33.7% (scale 5).



Gambar 6. Response to happy state and spreading hope

In addition, with regard to the statement "I thank and appreciate others," a majority of respondents indicate that they are indeed capable of expressing gratitude and appreciation towards others. *Gambar 7* demonstrates this positive trend. Scale 5 (48.1%) signifies that the participants genuinely express thanks and appreciation towards other individuals. Furthermore, when questioned about their ability to empathize with both themselves and others, the respondents largely agree with the statement. They opt for scale 4 (44.4%) and 5 (28.9%). This suggests that the students demonstrate efforts to practice self-love as well as extend compassion towards others.



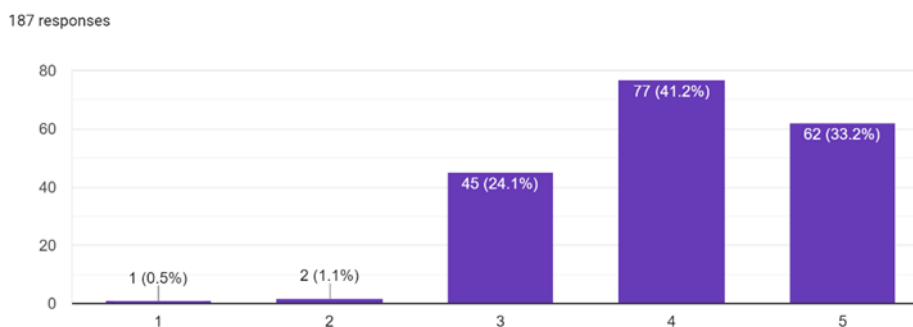
Gambar 7. Response to thanking and appreciating others

Regarding the statement concerning living in the present and focusing on the future, 63 students (33.7%) select scale 1, indicating that they genuinely live in the present and prioritize future-oriented thinking. They appear to have overcome past experiences and anxieties. 44 students (23.5%) fall under scale 2, reflecting their positive attitude towards embracing the present while still keeping an eye on the future. However, a quarter of the participants (47 students) choose to remain in the middle ground, while 24 students (12.8%) may have not yet embraced living in the present and continue to harbor anxieties about the future.

Next, do they provide access to talents for those who require them? In relation to this inquiry, 40.6% and 34.8% of the respondents indicate scale 3 and 4 respectively. This suggests that the majority of first-year students have not yet fully made their talents accessible to those in need. Despite their lack of laziness in developing their talents, they tend to keep their talents to themselves. They appear to encounter difficulties when it comes to making their talents available to others. However, when comparing this situation to the final



statement of the survey, students primarily consider others and contemplate ways to assist them. This pattern is illustrated in *Gambar 8*, where 41.2% and 33.2% of the participants express their preference for thinking about others and finding ways to help them.



Gambar 8. Response to thinking and helping others

Drawing on the previous findings, it is evident that these participants truly acknowledge the drastic changes in the world brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. As indicated by Beach et al (2022), Hoffman et al (2020), Kakaei et al (2022), Luo et al (2020), Meyerowitz-Katz (2020), and Swinnen et al (2021), the students have witnessed transformations in various domains such as health, economy, politics, society, and education. It is quite apparent that college students are now taking the time to contemplate the situation. This notion aligns with Avelar's (2020) argument that social distancing can lead to contemplation. Furthermore, the occurrence of panic buying, as observed by Jackson (n.d), seems to be a rare phenomenon among the selected participants. The majority of students acknowledge that they adhere to government regulations as a means of mitigating this disaster. This echoes the arguments put forth by Alwan et al. (2020), Hauser et al. (2020), Rothan & Byrareddy (2020), and Sutton et al. (2020) regarding pandemic management strategies.

### 3.2. Perception Based on Open-ended Questionnaire

This section is based on the result of open-ended questionnaire. There were three reflective questions distributed to the first-year students of the selected university. They are *'What could I reflect on the situation caused by this global pandemic?'*, *'Could I learn something?'*, *'What have I done concretely?'*. Certainly, these questions are optional. However, the responses are surprisingly significant. Therefore, the researchers classify those responses into some categories as follows.

#### 3.2.1. Self-Maturation and Introspection

There exists a considerable multitude of responses that pertain to self-development and reflection. Primarily, the participants have transformed into individuals who possess a heightened self-love and exhibit greater maturity. By confining themselves to their residences, they were able to play a minor role in disrupting the chain of this widespread coronavirus outbreak. They even contributed their funds to procure masks and distributed them among others. They firmly believe that it is imperative for fellow humans to extend assistance to one another, share resources, and eschew selfishness, particularly for those who lack any means. Furthermore, the students also acquire the ability to embrace any circumstance, as everyone in this world undergoes the same experiences.

Moreover, the students have the potential to evolve into superior versions of themselves. They express, "Do not squander the precious gift of life that has been bestowed upon you." They have learned to value time and cherish moments, for the future remains uncertain. Consequently, they can only exhibit gratitude for their present circumstances and seize opportunities without wastage. Some individuals have stated, "Remain true to yourself and never capitulate." What they are able to contemplate is the notion that they now possess a deeper understanding of themselves and experience a heightened sense of independence. We were educated to comprehend ourselves through the actions we undertake. Throughout the course of the pandemic, the participants appear to undergo a transformation in their demeanor, such as prioritizing health, avoiding crowds, and adhering to governmental regulations. They develop an appreciation for and an awareness of this situation. It will not be feasible for the future to revert back to normalcy post this pandemic. This necessitates a modification in lifestyle, thought processes, work practices, old habits, and their adaptation to the prevailing circumstances. They strive to leverage the resources available to them in order to become better individuals and positively influence those around them. The participants learn to approach their work with greater enthusiasm, given the vast number of individuals that have been laid off. Maintaining optimism serves as an additional means of self-support.



However, some individuals perceive that they encounter difficulties in managing their emotions. This is likely attributed to the fact that they are confined to their homes and are burdened with college assignments. The participants assert, "I am now able to comprehend and pay attention to the conditions in my surroundings, including cleanliness, as well as the health of my parents and friends. The primary activities I engage in involve staying at home and upholding cleanliness and good health." Throughout this pandemic, the participants acknowledge that they confine themselves to their residences and venture outside solely to procure items that are unavailable.

From this global outbreak, the participants have undoubtedly acquired the knowledge of appreciating the time at their disposal. They have gained the ability to exercise self-control and refrain from being self-centered. Some respondents have expressed their inclination towards utilizing their time optimally to foster creativity. This inclination stems from the realization that prior to the existence of this global epidemic, time was often wasted on unproductive endeavors. As a consequence of being confined to their homes, people have developed a greater appreciation for the value of time. One student reflects upon this newfound understanding, stating, "I have learned the profound lesson that life is unpredictable. Previously, I seldom prioritized cleanliness, but now I find myself frequently washing my hands, wearing a mask, and maintaining distance. It has dawned upon me that cleanliness should have been a constant practice, not a recent adaptation." Moreover, this student acknowledges the economic decline and the subsequent surge in prices. The unlimited use of data for social media consumption has given way to the realization that online lectures now require data usage. This realization has shed light on the fact that seemingly trivial matters may hold significance in the future. As everything has shifted to the online realm, individuals have become perturbed by concerns regarding signal strength, internet connectivity, and the like.

Additionally, a respondent confesses, "When the pandemic first began, I found myself in a state of fear. I experienced profound anxiety and confusion. This new routine unsettled me. I now wake up and immediately delve into my studies, with a multitude of assignments awaiting completion. Initially, I absorbed every piece of news circulating on social media." However, the respondent goes on to declare, "Now, I find myself in a phase of learning and adaptation. I wake up with a sense of purpose and engage in work diligently. The desire to visit malls and indulge in ramen has dissipated. Rather, I find contentment in consuming instant noodles while immersing myself in Korean dramas. Perhaps, in due course, I will transition into a phase of personal growth." Many participants have derived valuable lessons from this experience, learning to adjust to and comprehend the current situation, manage their emotions amidst the epidemic, and utilize their free time in a constructive manner.

### **3.2.2. Being Aware of Health and Hygiene**

To commence, the respondents demonstrate an awareness of the significance of environmental sanitation (cleanliness) and a salubrious lifestyle. This is due to the understanding that a cognizance of well-being practices and environmental hygiene has the potential to foster a healthy existence, thereby mitigating the risk of contracting ailments beyond COVID-19. The consumption of nourishing sustenance is unequivocally recommended. Furthermore, upholding cleanliness serves as a deterrent to hazardous diseases. A student articulates, "Indeed, initially, I experienced apprehension and trepidation, but ultimately, I felt equanimous as long as I accorded greater attention to cleanliness and continued to comply with governmental regulations in order to curtail the dissemination of this virus." Moreover, by remaining within the confines of one's abode, there appears to be a reduction in pollution on thoroughfares.

Amidst this pandemic, the students dutifully adhere to the protocol to effectively forestall the transmission of COVID-19, namely by observing home confinement, donning facial coverings, abstaining from disseminating fallacious news pertaining to this pandemic, and so forth. The participants also perceive a positive impact in the form of hand hygiene. A student expounds, "I lead a wholesome life. For instance, upon returning home, I promptly cleanse my hands and purify my physique." In addition to this, the global economy has witnessed a slump and a multitude of enterprises have succumbed to insolvency. Numerous valuable lessons can be derived from this predicament. For instance, it is incumbent upon individuals to uphold personal hygiene and environmental cleanliness so as to preserve global safety and tranquility. In Indonesia, there remains a sizable portion of the populace who possess limited knowledge regarding the perils of COVID-19, hence disregarding prohibitions and regulations that are in the best interest of all. This perhaps stems from a dearth of health-related information despite an abundance of scientific literature pertaining to the pandemic, such as the works of Capocasa et al (2022), Carnut et al (2020), Koelle et al (2022), Levin et al (2020), Mallapaty (2020), Msemburi et al (2023), O'Driscoll et al (2021), and Wang et al (2022).

### **3.2.3. Taking Care of Family and Staying at Home**

The phenomenon of physical distancing in the context of preventing and interrupting the transmission of the COVID-19 virus has undeniably resulted in individuals becoming closer and spending quality time with their families. A student articulates, "I have begun to foster a sense of closeness with my family, as previously I was perceived as indifferent towards them and my surroundings. The abundance of free time allows for opportunities to congregating with close relatives." Furthermore, while news reports may instill fear in readers, some respondents maintain a positive outlook and remain optimistic that this pandemic will eventually conclude. They acknowledge the significance of unity and find solace in the increased amount of time spent at home with their families during this period of quarantine. For instance, they devote more time to their mothers, assisting in meal preparation and acquiring new culinary skills. Thus, it is indeed accurate to assert that pandemic management strategies, particularly travel restrictions as argued by Chinazzi et al. (2020), can yield benefits for both individuals and society.

This crisis presents an opportunity for select students to embody the role of a role model within their family or close circle of friends. They can encourage their families to adopt a healthy lifestyle and contribute to curbing the transmission of COVID-19. Some individuals emphasize, "Do not squander precious moments with your family, as I have only recently experienced a sense of intimacy with my parents and siblings. Previously, we seldom gathered together. Place a higher value on time. Being at home with one's parents and siblings is a most cherished experience." Indeed, participants develop a heightened appreciation for the importance of togetherness within the family, as well as among friends and others, as they actively engage in shared activities to strengthen their bonds. Additionally, they learn the practice of patience and confidence in their interactions with others, and they navigate the spectrum of positive and negative emotions. Some individuals also recognize that cultivating a positive mindset, spreading optimism, extending a helping hand to others, and offering prayers to God for the swift cessation of this epidemic are actions within their purview.

#### **3.2.4. Social Humanitarian Solidarity**

This section focuses on the aspect of social humanitarian solidarity. The current pandemic is perceived to enhance social cohesion and foster a sense of empathy within society. For example, the distribution of essential goods, provision of free masks, and monetary donations to those in need have become widespread practices. Respondents believe that in the face of challenges, individuals must act wisely and not selfishly, taking into account the impact on others. They have begun to assimilate into society and contemplate how they would feel if they were in a position of disadvantage. The COVID-19 virus has significantly affected individuals worldwide and has had a detrimental impact on the global economy. It is hoped that this pandemic will swiftly pass, allowing for the smooth functioning of all systems across the globe.

Interestingly, one student reflects, "I have come to realize that prior to the outbreak of the coronavirus, we were all preoccupied with our personal pursuits, neglecting activities that could benefit the wider community. However, the arrival of the virus has had a profound impact on us, prompting us to recognize the importance of supporting one another during times of adversity." Some students acknowledge that they may not have taken tangible actions yet, but have already contemplated ways to assist others. Through this global epidemic, they have gained an understanding of the significance of empathy and humanity, as these emotions enable us to provide assistance to one another. A participant shares, "I have refrained from spreading false information that could exacerbate the situation and have avoided hoarding essential items such as masks, hand sanitizers, and soap."

From this outbreak, the respondents have acquired a valuable lesson: as human beings, it is our duty to assist one another and collaborate in mitigating the impact of this pandemic. Both the underprivileged and the affluent must actively participate in the collective efforts to combat this virus. During this crisis, all facets of human nature become evident, showcasing both the positive and negative aspects, reminding us once again that our existence necessitates the presence of others. Another profound statement is made, "I am mindful of prioritizing, such as when there was a shortage of medical masks, I refrained from purchasing one as I recognized that there were individuals who required them more urgently. Thus, I only stocked up on medicine."

#### **3.2.5. Religious Faith and Views on Life**

The response of the questionnaire shows the students' reflection on religious faith and views on life. For example, the participants feel that they are closer to God, grateful because they are still given health and protected from disease. They live life with positive thinking. With this outbreak, the students remain grateful because they could learn to be patient, help each other and pray so that they can be protected from this COVID-19 disease. Some students perceive that what is happening right now is a test from God. They realized that all this time they have been too busy with their own affairs that they have forgotten about worshipping the Almighty. God knows what is best for humanity is another statement written by the participants. When referred to the literature review (Lee et al, 2022a; Lee et al, 2022b; Li & Cao, 2022; Sisti et al, 2023), it is clear that the role's involvement of religious communities is likely to benefit people tackle this crisis.

Furthermore, the students could learn a lot from this situation how difficult it is to live this life. They know how difficult it is to be in a pandemic crisis like this and of course it changes some of the real life that people usually live. Here all one can do is follow the circumstances and adapt. An interesting response is “My situation still allows me to enjoy pleasures such as considering a holiday at home, a lot of time is spent doing relaxing things such as watching dramas, doing assignments, listening to songs, and doing many things with the amount of free time available. I think this kind of life is fun but boring and not filled with challenges.”

Another student mentions, “From this pandemic I have learned that people's patience will be tested, where health and the economy will decline. What I can do is try to accept reality, make peace with myself and the environment. Keep maintaining cleanliness and health. I learned to be grateful for what I have been given and not to complain too much about life now.” The participants realize that they live in a new era. They used to be able to breathe free air but now it is blocked by a mask. One should learn to be patient and accept this condition. The COVID-19 pandemic is indeed dangerous, but one may continue to pray for the good of the nation. Everyone, whether rich or poor, if they are affected by a disease like this, social status will no longer be useful. A student writes, “I felt I have to get closer to God and have to start realizing what I have been doing.”

### **3.2.6. Maintaining Sociality and Obeying Health Protocols**

The topics mentioned are clearly evident in the responses gathered from the questionnaire. Despite the restrictions imposed on outdoor activities and social gatherings, individuals are still able to establish and cultivate meaningful connections through various means such as engaging in conversations, making phone calls, and utilizing video communication platforms. The respondents appear to have developed the ability to exercise patience and resist the temptation to gather with friends or visit public places. Instead, they occupy themselves by engaging in activities within the confines of their homes, such as exercising, cooking, cleaning, and even gardening, to alleviate feelings of monotony. In such circumstances, the participants have demonstrated a remarkable adaptation by adhering to governmental regulations that advocate for engaging in activities at home and practicing social distancing. Furthermore, they have acquired a newfound appreciation for life and the individuals in their immediate vicinity, recognizing the necessity of embracing joy and expressing gratitude, especially when considering the predicament faced by professionals such as doctors and nurses who are unable to be with their families.

Certain individuals have come to the realization that society at large continues to display a sense of indifference towards the prevailing conditions, often shifting the burden of responsibility onto other entities. They argue that the community must also take action and assume responsibility in order to curtail the rapid transmission of COVID-19. It is imperative for society to comply with the directives issued by the government for their own benefit, which includes wearing face masks when venturing outside and observing social distancing to prevent the dissemination of the virus. Undoubtedly, the situation at hand is far from ideal. One individual expressed their sentiments as follows: “Although I find this situation to be rather tedious, I am still willing to adhere to the recommendations put forth by the government and consistently offer my prayers to God.” This positive attitude towards governmental regulations, aimed at implementing strategies to effectively manage the pandemic, as suggested by Alwan et al. (2020), Hauser et al. (2020), Rothan & Byrareddy (2020), and Sutton et al. (2020), holds the potential to mitigate the severity of this crisis.

A collective effort is being made by all members of society to adhere to the prescribed protocols in order to break the chain of viral transmission. Consequently, it is incumbent upon each individual to assume responsibility and contribute to these efforts. Several concrete examples of actions taken by participants include staying at home and maintaining a safe distance from others. In instances where leaving the house is necessary, individuals consistently wear masks and diligently practice proper hand hygiene to preempt the possibility of an outbreak. Some students have acknowledged that they have learned to exercise patience when interacting with individuals who suddenly believe themselves to be experts in public health due to the consumption of false information propagated on platforms such as Facebook and other social media outlets. In fact, one student remarked, “I maintain skepticism towards any information pertaining to COVID-19 unless I can verify its source, and I choose to place my complete trust in the government.” Ultimately, it is the collective hope of all individuals that this pandemic will swiftly come to an end, allowing society to resume its normal activities without further delay.

### **3.2.7. Being Creative and Innovative**

The findings reveal that being creativity and innovation emerge as prominent themes. Participants express a desire to enhance their creative and innovative abilities, even within the confines of their homes. A notable example is their engagement in creating homemade snacks to accompany their daily activities. Moreover, they have acquired the skill of frugality, effectively minimizing expenses. Within their domestic

environment, they strive to continuously develop their talents and aptitudes, ensuring their productivity in performing meaningful tasks. Due to the current economic decline in Indonesia, individuals are inclined towards saving money. Additionally, the pandemic has deterred them from indulging in shopping activities.

One valuable lesson that students have gleaned from this outbreak is the significance of maintaining a positive mindset and cultivating happiness. They recognize the necessity of adapting to the current circumstances by remaining vigilant of their surroundings and fostering compassion towards others. Furthermore, they appreciate the endeavors undertaken by various entities. Consequently, they have learned to utilize their available time to explore and nurture their individual capacities.

### 3.2.8. Attitude towards Information, Study and Health Professionals

Furthermore, the outcomes of the questionnaire underscore the students' attitudes towards information, academic pursuits, and healthcare professionals. In terms of acquiring information, the students assert that they have developed a discerning, critical, and cautious approach to receiving information, thus avoiding the dissemination of hoax news. It is worth noting that some individuals confess to refraining from accessing or reading news related to the coronavirus due to their inability to ascertain its authenticity.

With regards to their academic endeavors, the students have acquired valuable skills in time management, effectively balancing their time between lectures and various activities. The current pandemic has significantly impacted the realm of education, prompting individuals to prioritize personal and environmental hygiene, while adhering to government regulations to remain at home. As one participant eloquently states, "I find online lectures to be quite challenging due to the inconsistent network connectivity in my village, often resulting in my inability to attend lectures and submit assignments on time."

A number of participants have experienced both positive and negative repercussions as a result of this outbreak. The negative aspect entails the disruption of their usual study routines, necessitating a shift to online learning. The confinement within their homes has hindered their engagement in various activities. Additionally, the tasks assigned by instructors in different courses have become increasingly demanding. Pertaining to the assignments given by their respective institutions, one participant articulates, "It feels as though I am studying for 24 hours due to the overwhelming number of assignments allocated by the lecturers, all of which have strict deadlines. I am grateful for the preservation of my physical and spiritual well-being. This experience has imparted maturity upon me, as I now perceive these tasks as preparations for my future endeavors."

Finally, the students' disposition towards healthcare professionals is also apparent. One student contends, "Specifically, I perceive that I am contributing in a small way to both the government and medical personnel by adhering to the government's regulations to curtail the spread of this epidemic." The participants acknowledge a heightened level of respect and admiration for every occupation that individuals engage in, exemplified by the current COVID-19 circumstance where doctors and nurses tirelessly combat the viral pandemic. The students acquire the ability to accept the situation, equip themselves to respond to unforeseen events such as COVID-19, maintain a positive outlook, and remain at home to assist medical personnel. Even though one may be confined to their residence, it proves to be exceedingly beneficial for healthcare staff and aids in mitigating the dissemination of COVID-19. Consequently, the students develop a sense of reverence towards others, particularly those who exert considerable effort in this predicament, such as doctors, midwives, nurses, and the like. As a result of this ordeal, they acquire a greater appreciation for life and contemplate their future endeavors.

Drawing from the aforementioned findings and discussion, it is essential to emphasize that the first-year university students who partook in this study were able to introspect upon their personal and academic lives during the initial stages of the coronavirus pandemic. The three zones enable the students to progress from the fear zone to the learning zone and eventually to the growth zone. This corroborates the viewpoints posited by Jackson (n.d), Avelar (2020), and Berman (2020) with regard to the delineation of these zones. The majority of students exhibit characteristics aligned with the learning zone and are likely to gradually transition into the growth zone. The educational aspects and acquisition of information play a pivotal role in fostering their intellectual development. This is made evident through the students' less impulsive demeanor, increased thoughtfulness, and purposeful actions. Additionally, they become more cognizant of their own limitations and subsequently experience a decrease in anxiety related to exerting control over every aspect of their lives, thereby affording themselves the opportunity to release their concerns. Ultimately, the participants become more discerning consumers of information, carefully moderating their intake.

## 4. CONCLUSION

It has been argued that the primary objective of this study was to examine the introspection of university students in relation to their personal and academic lives during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. This investigation was based on the framework of three distinct zones, namely the fear zone,

learning zone, and growth zone. These zones, developed by Canales, have gained significant attention on social media platforms during times of crisis, and have been utilized by various institutions and individuals to promote introspection. It is evident that the utilization of this diagram or roadmap has enabled first-year students to recognize the potential for self-reflection and contemplation amidst this unprecedented situation. However, it is important to acknowledge that as human beings, students are prone to respond, react, and alter their perspectives as they gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their surroundings. Importantly, it should be noted that the nature of students' introspection on personal and academic matters varies when examined through the lens of the three zones. Various factors, such as the transition from high school to college and the shift towards online learning, which necessitates autonomous learning, influence the way in which students reflect. Based on the discussion, apparently, the students could possibly develop self-maturation and introspection, health and hygiene awareness, family caring, social humanitarian solidarity, religious faith and views on life, creativity and innovation, and attitude towards information and study. Ultimately, the research proposes that, in conjunction with society, college students can gradually transition from the fear zone to the learning zone and eventually to the growth zone, in order to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic. This represents a valuable lesson that has been learned.

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