
SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN TIMES OF CRISIS: THE POWER OF OPTIMISM, ADAPTABILITY AND POSITIVE RELIGIOUS COPING

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Introduction

It has been more than a year since we have been living in the COVID-19 pandemic. Many things in our daily lives are affected and changed, starting from work, school, worship, socializing, and even family life. Countries around the world are making efforts to prevent and overcome this pandemic, including Indonesia. During the pandemic, the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2021) has introduced the "5M policy" which compels the general public to wear masks, maintain distance, wash hands, avoid crowds, and reduce mobility. This policy is considered quite effective in reducing the transmission of the COVID-19 disease. And yet, this policy also causes side effects for individual psychological well-being, economic, social, and religiosity (Molteni et al., 2021; Di Corrado et al., 2020; Dubey et al., 2020; Olivia et al., 2020).

To further bend the number of COVID-19 transmissions, the Indonesian government has also held a vaccination program that targets approximately 181.5 million people. The vaccine program is initiated to achieve herd immunity by March 2022 and to create a healthy and productive society (Indonesian Ministry of Health, 2021). A survey that was conducted to 115,000 people in 34 provinces covering 508 regencies or cities (99% out of 514 total regencies or cities) shows that there is a high public interest in the vaccine program where two-thirds of the general public saying that they are supporting and ready to participate in the program (Aditya, 2020). It seems that this enormous public support comes from the great desire to end the COVID-19 pandemic and the hope of returning to the way of living before the pandemic.

According to Day (1969, in Musschenga, 2019), hope has two elements: a desire for something (the conative aspect) and a belief on how likely a desire can be fulfilled (the cognitive aspect). However, according to Musschenga (2019), hope must also have elements of "imagination and anticipation" as well as "action orientation". One must both imagine and anticipate what they hope to come true. Furthermore, one must also take action, including overcoming obstacles, to fulfill their hopes. Hope has two types, namely true and false hope. False hope is often referred to as unjustified hope, which is caused by ignorance or lack of information regarding the possibility that certain desires can be fulfilled. In short, false hope does not only arise from unjustified belief, but also a result of unjustified desire.

If we consider this understanding of hope, does the desire to live like the way before the pandemic a true or false hope? Moreover, does this hope arise from a false belief due to a lack of information regarding the long-term impact of Covid-19? Then, what do we need to survive and thrive in a time of crisis with no end in sight? The understanding of false belief as well as the knowledge on how to survive and thrive in a pandemic are vital for the general public, since it enables them to determine the most appropriate steps in dealing with pandemic and adjusting to the 'new normal'. The public also needs to be educated about mental health to help them achieve and maintain psychological well-being during the pandemic.

Thus, to facilitate these needs, a psychoeducation approach is necessary. Psychoeducation is a public education which provide information to the wider community about various knowledge and skills needed to solve daily problems (Supratiknya, 2011). The psychoeducation method has been proven effective in increasing the knowledge and understanding of counsellors in schools (Puspitasari et al., 2019). Consequently, as described below, the following activity also implements the psychoeducation approach to provide the general public with knowledge and understanding on settling and adapting to the new normal situations. The psychoeducation will be held online, so that many people can follow from their homes without violating health protocols established by the government.

The lecture and discussion activity involved speakers from medical personnel and psychologists, with participants being the general public within religious organizations. Participants take part in this activity through Zoom and YouTube platforms, while speakers and moderators are seated in one large room and are sufficiently distanced from one another according to the health protocols recommended by the government (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Lecture and Discussion Activity

Discussion

The lecture and discussion activity consist of two sessions, including presentations of theory and a question-and-answer session. The medical material covers knowledge and understanding about the COVID-19 virus, specifically how it spreads and treatments for the virus. This material also focuses on the vaccination process, its benefits and side effects. Meanwhile, the psychology material covers four subtopics, including: (1) impact of Covid-19 on individuals and organizations, (2) personality, (3) adaptability and (4) positive religious coping.

1. Impact of Covid-19 on individuals and organizations

No one have ever expected that the COVID-19 virus would spread so widely and become a pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic suddenly changed our entire routines and plans in all sides of life. It is thought that when individuals and organizations face changes in a similar pattern. The Kübler-Ross Change Curve® theory (see Figure 2) can be used to discuss individual and organizational responses to life-changing events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This theory consists of 7 stages, including:

- 1) **Shock:** the stage when the individual feels very shocked due to a perceived mismatch between expectation and reality, which often makes one cognitively and behaviorally dull.
- 2) **Denial:** the stage when the individual feels the incident is only temporary, so that changes do not need to be made. Doing everything as usual.
- 3) **Frustration:** realizing that events are real, resulting in feelings of anger, frustration, insecurity and confusion.
- 4) **Depression:** lack of energy, lack of enthusiasm, fear, regret, indifference, unmotivated.
- 5) **Experiment:** a time when individuals acknowledge that rejecting what has happened is a waste, thereby individuals begin to accept and try new approaches and learn the skills to adapt to new circumstances.
- 6) **Decision:** The individual learns how to act in new situations, seeks meaning for why this happened, and begins to have more positive feelings.
- 7) **Integration:** New skills, attitudes and behaviors become new norms in everyday life. Individuals become "new individuals".

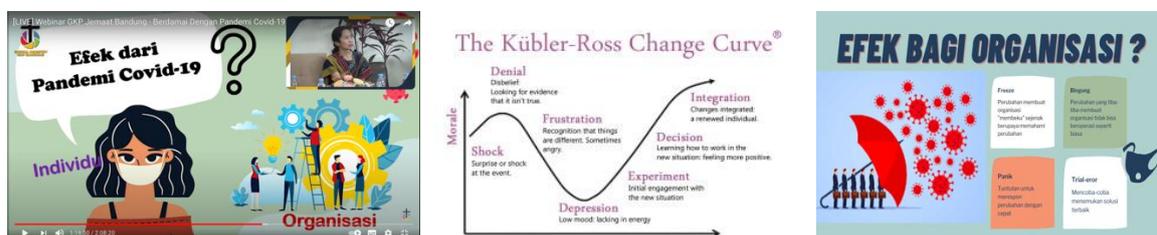


Figure 2. Lecture Material on the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

If we look back at The Kübler-Ross Change Curve®, each person or organization may eventually get through the stages, but the big question is how quickly will individuals or organizations adjust to new situations? How fast can they advance and make it through to the integration stage? Facing the pandemic requires quick and precise adjustments such that individuals and organizations can continue to survive and even thrive during this crisis. To properly pass the stages that was described above, both individuals and organizations need three basic resources, including: personality, adaptability and positive religious coping.

2. Personality

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has been causing a lot of stress, it is possible that not everyone will experience a psychological disorder. Individual differences in perception, coping, and resilience will affect how each person deals with adversity. It is believed that optimism and

pessimism are important constructs in dealing with uncontrolled life events, including stress due to the coronavirus pandemic (Arslan et al., 2020). Optimism is a person's perspective in dealing with good or bad events or circumstances. Optimistic individuals view bad events as temporary, and perceive their causes as limited to only specific things. Optimistic individuals believe that bad events are caused by circumstances, fate, or other people, and not themselves. On the contrary, a pessimist believes that bad events will last long and spoil everything he have done and considers these events to be his fault (Seligman 2006). In short, the optimist and the pessimist differs in their way of looking at good and bad situations.

When facing the Covid-19 pandemic, pessimists and optimists will have different point of view. The optimists think positively, are high-spirited, look for solutions, and are more receptive to change. For optimists, the pandemic is a catalyst for positive changes and transformation. In contrast, a pessimist will feel anxious, give up easily, are not sure of their abilities, and avoid difficulties. For the pessimist, the pandemic is an obstruction to progress in life.

In a similar vein, an organization response to environmental conditions is very much influenced by its "personality". According to Dickson et al. (2006), there are two types of organizations, namely mechanistic and organic. These types refer to the different characteristics, culture, and climate within the organization. A mechanistic organization are rigid, governed by formalized policies and rules, have established routines, and slow to change. Meanwhile, organic organization are flexible, full of variety, and agile. When facing the Covid-19 pandemic, mechanistic organizations may experience a slower change or even a resistance towards changes. Mechanistic organization may perceive Covid-19 is something that creates chaos in a stable environment. In contrast, organic organizations are more open, driven to quickly make changes, and adapt to current conditions. For this organization type, Covid-19 may be seen as momentum for companies to progress and exist in the society (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Lecture Material on Personality (Individual and Organizational).

3. Adaptability

Adaptability is one of the skills that is needed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic (Mateo, 2020). Adaptability is the ability, willingness and motivation to change what one has in order to adjust his or herself to change. This skill can be widely transferred to other different settings and is not limited to a particular job, discipline, or task (Mateo, 2020). Therefore, those with this skill will be able to get through and survive a crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.



Figure 4. Lecture Material on Adaptability

Individuals and organizations with low adaptability will see change as something temporary, thus they are not compelled to adjust, and even tend to passively wait for the situation to return to the way it was before. On the other hand, individuals and organizations with high adaptability will view the pandemic as a situation that demands rapid changes or adjustments, thus they will have high level of readiness for changes (see Figure 4).

4. Positive Religious Coping

In crisis situations, individuals tend to turn to religion to seek comfort and explanation for what is happening. People often pray when they experience difficult and uncertain situations. Accordingly, the pandemic has also affected the level of individual religiosity (Bentzen, 2020). Individuals practice their religion to deal with anxiety and emotional distress that are caused by pandemic. There is an increase in praying and worshiping activities, which aims to gain understanding and comfort. As mentioned by Goodman (2020), faith provides one with strength and confidence and is an important way to deal with trauma and distress (see Figure 5).

Previous studies on religious coping have found that there are two religious coping styles, namely positive and negative religious coping styles. Positive religious coping is characterized by a trusting relationship with God, an act to find religious support, and a better religious judgment. In contrast, negative religious coping shows an unsafe relationship with God, dissatisfaction with religion, and a tendency to perceive stressful situations as "punishment" (Park, et al., 2018).

Individuals with positive religious coping tend to frame a situation in a hopeful way, encourage feelings of a strong attachment to their surroundings and other forces that are greater than oneself, such as God, and believe that something good will happen (Goodman, 2020). Individuals with positive religious coping also tend to have better mental health (Park, et al., 2018).



Figure 5. Lecture Material on Positive Religious Coping

5. Question-and-Answer Session

After the material session, a discussion session was held (see Figure 6). In this session, participants can directly ask the speakers using their mic or via the chat box at the respective Zoom or YouTube platforms. Each question will be answered accordingly by the speakers until the participant is satisfied with the answer. In this session, there were questions related to ways of improving adaptability skills. Additionally, participants asked about the most appropriate strategy for carrying out online or onsite worship.

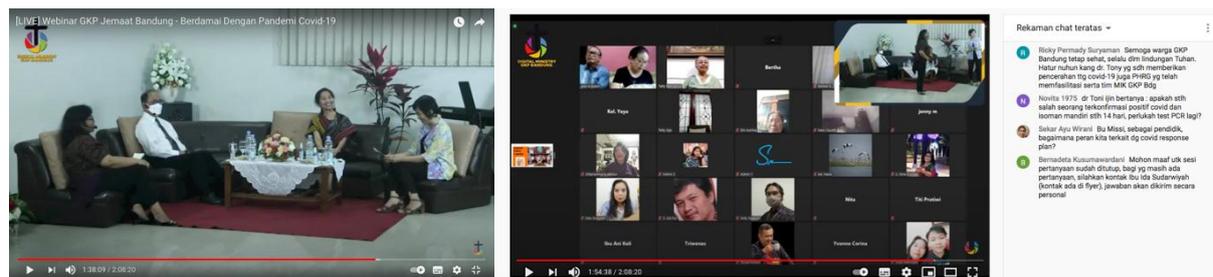


Figure 6. Question and Answer Session

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis widely and strongly affects the lives of individuals and organizations. To survive and thrive in this time of crisis, individuals and organizations must have three basic assets, that is to remain optimistic, be willing to adapt, and increase intimacy with God. These three assets can help us survive the crisis, adapt to the new normal, and even become strong and successful individuals and organizations.

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