



## "WE FACE OBSTACLES WITH IKHLAS": REFLECTION ON PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN RURAL TEGAL, CENTRAL JAVA, DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### Abstract

*This study examines the psychological flexibility among elementary school's teachers in rural settings who obliged to still carried out teaching activities during Covid-19 pandemics. The changing teaching methods along with other daily life changings are common to be studied in urban setting. But, the vulnerable group of teachers in rural community setting is under researched. The school in this rural setting also achieved good mark academically, even though hampered by pandemic. This study employed qualitative methods with phenomenological approach, as the most relevant design for studying a life experience. Participants were four elementary school's teachers in rural Tegal regency, Central Java. Data gathered through in-depth interview, and analyzed using the tradition of content analysis. Triangulation was conducted by interviewing significant others of each participant, to maintain credibility of the data. Results of this study showed that all the subjects reflecting that when facing obstacles during pandemic, they were able to bring up a set of skills that a person uses when faced with challenging thoughts, feelings, emotions and/or experiences. Themes emerged included struggle to adapt, such as "Create New Innovations to Address Solutions", "An Attitude of Willingness to Learn to Face Challenges", "Functioning Effectively Despite Obstacles", "The Attitude of Continuing to Live Despite Obstacles"; struggle to accept, such as "Responding to Situations with a Positive Outlook", "Gaining Wisdom"; and finding meaning of events such as "Desire to Become a Better Version of Oneself". Meanwhile, factors that influencing the psychological flexibility were teaching commitment, motivation, creativity, and social support. Overall, the study contributes to the comprehension of human virtue in a rural community setting during the hardest time of pandemic.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19 pandemic, Psychological Flexibility, Teachers, Rural

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**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji fleksibilitas psikologis guru Sekolah Dasar (SD) di Desa dalam menjalankan aktivitas pada masa pandemi Covid-19 lalu. Perubahan metode pengajaran serta kehidupan sehari-hari, lumrah untuk dikaji di lingkungan perkotaan, namun pada kelompok rentan guru di lingkungan pedesaan masih jarang diteliti. Sekolah yang menjadi lokasi lapangan penelitian pun meraih prestasi akademik yang baik, meskipun terkendala pandemi Covid-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis, sebagai desain yang paling relevan untuk mempelajari pengalaman hidup. Partisipan adalah empat guru Sekolah Dasar (SD) di salah satu Desa di Kabupaten Tegal, Jawa Tengah. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan dianalisis menggunakan metode analisis isi (content analysis), dengan triangulasi data melibatkan significant others untuk menjaga kredibilitas data. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah guru SD di Desa merefleksikan situasi saat menghadapi rintangan pandemic dengan memunculkan seperangkat keterampilan yang digunakan seseorang saat dihadapkan dengan pikiran, perasaan, emosi, atau pengalaman yang menantang. Tema temuan penelitian ini diantaranya berjuang untuk beradaptasi, seperti "Menciptakan Inovasi Baru untuk Menemukan Solusi", "Sikap Mau Belajar Menghadapi Tantangan", "Berkfungsi Efektif Meskipun Terkendala", "Sikap terus Menjalani Hidup Meskipun Terkendala"; berjuang untuk menerima, seperti "Menanggapi Situasi dengan Pandangan Positif", "Memperoleh Kebijaksanaan"; dan menemukan makna peristiwa seperti "Keinginan untuk Menjadi Versi Diri yang Lebih Baik". Temuan tersebut dilandasi oleh faktor pendukung, diantaranya komitmen mengajar, motivasi, kreativitas, dan dukungan sosial. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang kebijakan manusia di lingkungan pedesaan dalam mengatasi situasi sulit seperti pandemi Covid-19.

**Kata kunci:** *Fleksibilitas Psikologis, Pandemi Covid-19, Guru, Desa.*



## INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2020, the world was shocked at the change in daily situations caused by the emergence of Covid-19. The *World Health Organization* (WHO) dubbed Covid-19 a global pandemic that must be monitored collectively (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). Since the emergence of the pandemic, human living conditions have changed in all fields (Farboodi et al, 2021), including education. Specifically, Covid-19 has had a large impact on teachers. This is reinforced by current Indonesian government policy, which was not settled as the outbreak became more widespread. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia in the *Permenkes* issued a policy on Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) to tackle the spread of Covid-19 (*setneg.go.id*). Following this policy, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (2020) provided direction in the form of teaching and learning activities during the Covid-19 pandemic being carried out from home (*kemdikbud.go.id*). All of these policies create a new and unsettled situation. This poses its own challenges for teachers, especially elementary school teachers, both for their work and as individuals.

Previous studies have identified the challenges of teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, from the perspective of teachers. Daar and Nasar (2021) revealed the challenges of teaching and learning activities during the Covid-19 pandemic including; 1) unsupportive learning facilities. Many students do not have facilities such as smart phones or laptops. In addition, not all schools have internet facilities. 2) Some students live in

an environment with an inadequate internet network. Another research was revealed by Efriana (2021) who identified that many students do not have access to devices such as smart phones or computers to support online learning needed to meet learning needs. The same problem was also expressed by Anugrahana (2020) who more specifically discussed the challenges of elementary school teachers in dealing with pandemic situations, that not all students or their parents have smart phones or laptops, and if they have them, not all devices have good internet connections. Teachers or students who have limited cell phone or laptop features also hinder the learning process. Elementary school teachers are also burdened with the cost of internet quotas (Anugrahana, 2020; Purwanto et al, 2020). In addition, not all students can learn optimally due to limited digital literacy from parents as companions, or the difficulty of parents in accompanying distance learning during working hours. These conditions make teachers feel very hampered, because teachers need to repeatedly provide information to the students (Anugrahana, 2020). In addition to experiencing challenges faced during teaching and learning activities, elementary school teachers experience other challenges.

Another challenge teachers face is the disparity that arises in rural school *settings*. Prior to the pandemic, schools in Indonesia experienced disparities in conditions in the Rural Environment and in the City. Vito and Krisnani (2015) revealed that there are general gaps in rural schools, including in terms of access to information, school facilities, and teacher resources.



Digital literacy that has not been optimized is also a challenge for elementary school teachers in the rural during the Covid-19 pandemic, all of whose access requires an understanding of technology. Diputra, Trisiantari, and Jayanta (2020) revealed that the digital knowledge of elementary school teachers is mostly limited to the use of *Power Point*. This will certainly increase the variety of teacher obstacles during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially at the elementary level. For example, the research results of Yulianti and Mukminin (2021) stated that during the Covid-19 pandemic, the thing that made the gap between teaching and learning conditions in rurals and cities was the poor infrastructure in rurals that triggered weak internet connections, so elementary school teachers in rurals needed more effort to overcome it. Various problems arising from teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic with online learning can make elementary school teachers feel stressed and bored with the routine (Purwanto et al., 2020). Being in a pandemic condition is a new challenge for teachers to be able to continue to manage stress well (Anderson et al., 2021).

Teachers are one of the professions that are vulnerable to stress (Agai-Demjaha, 2015). Facing the conditions of inequality in the rural compared to the city, during the Covid-19 pandemic situation can cause the strengthening of negative emotions. Being in a Covid-19 pandemic situation triggers an increase in negative emotions that are manifested in various forms ranging from daily stress, anxiety, to depression (Wąsowicz et al., 2021). Therefore, psychological strengths are

needed that can help elementary school teachers, especially in rurals, overcome stress, anxiety, and depression as well as various other emotions. Variables are needed from within the individual to overcome challenging situations related to mental well-being, including psychological flexibility (Wong, 2020; Yildirim & Arslan, 2022; Arslan et al., 2020; Wąsowicz et al., 2021).

Psychological flexibility is the human's ability to stay contacting the present moment regardless of unpleasant feelings, thoughts, and body sensations while choosing a behavior based on individual values and goals (Hayes et al., 2006). It means psychological flexibility is a conscious interpretation of thoughts and feelings, which allows a person to connect with current events, and maintain positive behavior based on individual values and goals. Psychological flexibility is considered a basic aspect in achieving psychological health (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). Individuals with psychological flexibility are able to adapt to fluctuating situations, able to describe mental states, able to survive or improve perspectives for the better, and balance their desires and values (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). Inflexible psychological conditions will have an impact on the emergence of negative emotions, (Tavakoli et al., 2019) because it is related to the emotional exhaustion of teachers (Spencer et al., 2022). The impact of loss of psychological flexibility can lead to anxiety and depression (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). This is in line with the results of several recent studies, including research by Ciciek, Tanhan, and Bulus (2021) which



states that psychological inflexibility predicts depression and anxiety in teachers during the pandemic. Another study mentioned that psychological inflexibility is related to weak mental health in teachers (Ortega-Jimenez et al., 2021). Depression in teachers can also have an impact on personal and professional life (Agyapong et al., 2022). This can lead to difficulty meeting interpersonal demands, low productivity and impact other physical and psychological problems (Besse et al., 2015). The results of this study indicate that psychological inflexibility can directly impact on the decline in mental health of elementary school teachers, especially those who face teaching experiences in rurals during the Covid-19 pandemic, professionally also impacting the quality of teaching provided.

Researchers have conducted preliminary interviews with elementary school teachers in the rural who faced challenging conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Subject A revealed the routine conditions that teachers in the elementary school where subject A teaches, in the form of conducting *home visits* to students who have limited facilities. Subject A usually makes visits by bringing subject matter, and providing teaching. This certainly makes teachers need more time and energy in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, but this is done so that students can still reach maximum lessons despite being in limited conditions. Subject B, an elementary school teacher in one of the rurals in Central Java, said that although teachers feel that there are stressful conditions faced in teaching both online, offline, and doing *home visits*, in general, teachers at the elementary school

are still motivated to make the school the best school and produce students who excel in the next life. Teachers hope that what has been taught can support students' success as adults.

Anugrahana (2020) explains that although online learning contains challenges, there are elementary school teachers who are enthusiastic about providing new learning methods through *WhatsApp*. If students have problems understanding the material, the teacher will provide video tutorials or make video calls. Another example is presented in an article published on the news page, the Principal of one of the elementary schools in a rural in Tegal Regency, Central Java, Indonesia revealed that when the teacher provided online learning, it could not run well because some of the students did not have an internet connection, and did not even have an android cellphone. Even so, the obstacles that occurred did not prevent the elementary school teacher from continuing to teach. The method applied by the teacher there is a *home visit* according to the picket teacher's schedule, while still using strict health protocols (*radartegal.com*).

Based on this description, primary school teachers in the Rural during the Covid-19 pandemic faced various challenging conditions. By finding how teachers in rural school setting struggled with new adaptations due to pandemic situation, as well as factors that influence their accomplishment to the tasks, this study will contribute to better comprehension the psychological flexibility among the vulnerable teachers in rural communities.



## METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. According to Creswell (2013) phenomenology is a research strategy that identifies the human experience of a particular phenomenon. Moustakas (Creswell, 2013) stated that phenomenology requires researchers to examine participants to develop patterns and relationships of meaning.

The selection of participants in this study used purposive sampling technique with criteria determined by the researcher in order to obtain a sample that is in accordance with the research context. Patton (Poerwandari, 2001) explains that purposive sampling technique is an effort to select participants by taking samples that are in accordance with the phenomenon being studied, so that the samples obtained are quite representative. The criteria sample in this study were active elementary school teachers in the rural Tegal regency who kept taught during the pandemic, and experienced various obstacles in teaching during Covid-19 pandemic situation.

The data collection technique was carried out using a semi structured interview method that based on an interview guide contained questions around psychological flexibility aspects.

Data analysis in this study was carried out with a content analysis that has a tradition on "searching for the meaning" on the subjects' narration. Sugiyono (2008) revealed the stages in content analysis, including the description stage in the form of describing the information obtained, the reduction stage in the form of

reducing information to focus on certain issues to be analyzed, and the selection stage, namely parsing the focus that has been determined into details. After analyzing the data verbatim, robust themes were found, and that constructing the knowledge on psychological flexibility practiced by the teachers during pandemic. As suggested by Creswell (2013), to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, credibility in this study was maintained by triangulating the data through interviewing significant others such as closest friends and family members who know well the subjects' daily life.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The sample that matched the criteria for respondents in this study totaled 4 people, consisting of two men and two women, aged 31 to 50 years. Three teachers are homeroom teachers, and one teacher is an Islamic religious education teacher. All the participants in this study work at the same rural elementary school. The school was successfully achieved "Pilot School of Tegal Regency" although hampered by the pandemic. The school is located around 30 km away from the city of Tegal Regency, and to get to the school buildings, people have to pass through woods by public transportation.





Table 1 Participants data in this study.

Code	Ages	Sex
S1	46	M
S2	50	M
S3	31	F
S4	37	F

Based on all the data, the results obtained in the form of a description of the psychological flexibility of elementary school teachers in the rural reflected during the Covid-19 pandemic. The description of psychological flexibility in all subjects is contained in the seven themes emerged from the data: *"Create New Innovations to Address Solutions"*, *"An Attitude of Willingness to Learn to Face Challenges"*, *"Functioning Effectively Despite Obstacles"*, *"The Attitude of Continuing to Live Despite Obstacles"*, *"Responding to Situations with a Positive Outlook"*, *"Gaining Wisdom"*, *"The Desire to Become a Better Version of Oneself"*. While for the factors influencing it are: *"Commitment to teaching"*, *"Motivation"*, *"Creativity"* and *"Social support"*. Below is the description of each theme and the discussion followed.

#### **a. Create New Innovations to Address Solutions.**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the four subjects each created their innovations according to the conditions of the class they taught, including *daring* (online methods) and *luring* (offline methods). In S1, S2, and S3 learning innovations in the form of conducting *home visits*. In S1 *home visits* are carried out according to the needs and location of the student group, S1 groups students according to the proximity of the house. In

addition, S1 provides additional lessons related to hygiene and morals. The sample of subject's statement are quotes below:

*"According to the students need, sometimes I did home visits to their home and for my students in their neighborhood, then I taught them together in the house of theirs..." – S1*

Statements related to innovation in the form of *home visits* were also delivered by S3 and S4. In addition to *home visits*, S3 and S4 also invite individual students who have limitations to go to school to take materials or be taught additional materials. In S3, the application of innovation in the form of coming to school is applied to students with limited internet facilities, making it difficult to access information online.

Whereas in S4, the application of coming to school is applied to students who have limited understanding, so they need more learning efforts, therefore S4 invites these students to school. If S4 students have limited internet access, S4 will conduct teaching together at S4's home using health protocols. The subject's statement sample below:

*"If I met a student's family who had no facilities through internet based, for the example they had no smartphone or internet access, I came to the school for picket. Then, I gave their school materials and taught them" – S3*

*"I had a big house. During the pandemic condition, the students sometimes studied in my home. I made it like a shift system, for the example the student number 1 to number 5, came to my house on Monday at 9 am to 11am, something like that. I also adjust it in pandemic condition, such as 'menjaga jarak' like the government told us." – S4*



Each subject, S1, S2, S3, and S4, created their own learning methods, such as S1, S3, and S4 creating *YouTube channels*, and S2 applying tasks related to literacy on the internet. In addition to opening *YouTube channels*, S3 and S4 make *Power Points*, create materials using other applications such as *Canva* and or *Google Meet*. The sample of subject's statement are quotes below:

*"I taught during pandemics starting from new learn methods called 'daring' or online learning in YouTube media or Google Scholar.." – S2*

*"The other application that I used to explained the school materials was Canva, that applications so interesting I thought, now I can make poster, leaflet something like that and the content more playful and exciting so my students had interests to read the materials..." – S3*

### **b. An Attitude of Willingness to Learn to Face Challenges**

The four subjects, when facing the Covid-19 pandemic, define themselves as people who want to learn. According to all subjects, both the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, and normal conditions, are all the same, because life is learning. Therefore, for all subjects, the pandemic obstacles can be overcome. For example, S2, who initially did not know about technology, continued to learn by conducting training, so that now he understands better.

*"At first, I tried to calming down when faced the obstacles, so when I learn about new things, the results would be better, from did not know to knew something new..." – S2*

*"As a teacher I should learn, especially when I faced the pandemics." – S4*

### **c. Functioning Effectively Despite Obstacles**

When facing obstacles in the Covid-19 pandemic situation, all subjects continue to carry out their functions as teachers in elementary schools. All four subjects continue to make efforts so that their daily activities are carried out, even though they occasionally encounter obstacles. All subjects want that the work they do can make students able to absorb learning information properly and comfortably, not just fulfill the obligation to teach.

*"When the pandemics came, me and my colleagues did not stop to found the best way to taught during pandemics, so we did 'daring' learning with the combination methods like home visits and/or picket in the school." – S2*

*"I enjoyed when I faced the pandemic, so I was still productive in my own way during the pandemics." – S3*

This finding in line with the results of several studies about learning media and method, especially in Indonesia's rural situations during the Covid-19 pandemic. For the example the new implementation methods for teachers during Covid-19 pandemic by Prasetyo., et al (2021) explained that new methods for teachers facing Covid-19 pandemic used *daring* (online) with *WhatsApp Group* and *Google Classroom* features, and *luring* (offline) methods used *home visits* as their solutions when facing Covid-19 pandemic condition in Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta. Anugrahana (2020) explains that if students have problems understanding the





material, the teacher will provide video tutorials or make video calls. Faced with new challenges during pandemic required teacher's skills to adapting new situation.

Collie and Martin (2015) revealed that adaptability is relevant to the teacher's daily lives who experience unexpected events. Adaptability is considered as the main mental resource in adapting to individual cognition, behavior, and emotions in responding to events (Waldeck et al, 2021). Klein, Jacobson, and Robinson (2023) revealed that if someone is emotionally adaptive, they can be flexible in responding to emotions when facing stimulus. Psychological flexibility itself includes various human abilities to recognize and adapt to various situational demands by present moment focus and modulating behavior as required by the events contributed to adjusting to the real-world (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010).

#### **d. The Attitude of Continuing to Live Despite Obstacles**

Pandemic conditions are new conditions encountered by the subject, so that in carrying out life during a pandemic, the subject has an accepting attitude. This accepting attitude is shown by continuing to live his life, even though when living it the subject encounters obstacles. According to the subject, pandemic conditions are a destiny that must be lived, so it is not considered a burden in responding to challenges during the pandemic. The example of subject's statements below:

*"For me pandemic condition was the fate from Allah so all I can do was live it in ikhlas way." – S1*

*"Inshaa Allaah, we lived it in a good despite the obstacles we faced, just lived it with ikhlas." – S2*

#### **e. Responding to Situations with a Positive Outlook**

Facing the Covid-19 pandemic situation is not something easy to deal with. However, when responding to the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the four subjects expressed a response with a positive view. The positive views that each subject has have their own variations. In S2, for example, positive views on life are expressed in sentences with religious elements and remembering Allah as the creator of life. In S3 and S4, positive views are expressed with an attitude of enthusiasm for facing new conditions, and not complaining about the conditions they face. Subject's statement about responding to situations with a positive outlook below:

*"...I just tried to find the solutions to solved, if I found the hard times. Also, pandemics made me learn about many things. So, for me being in pandemic had good things too, right?" – S3*

*"Just lived it and tried the best, in any situations we faced..." – S4*

Acceptance is related to a process of accepting the events we faced, even though these conditions are stressful (Wersebe et al, 2018). Psychological flexibility defined as an acceptance of unpleasant sensations, thoughts, and feelings while focusing on the present moment, which allows individuals to behave according to the context required in pursuit of one's goals and values (Hayes et al., 1999; Bond & Flaxman, 2006; Riamaci et al., 2019). Individuals who are "psychologically flexible" will show a



tendency to control internal events due to the acceptance process. This considerate, accepting and non-judgemental attitude allows individuals to focus more on opportunities required to the present moment, with positive effects on performance, motivation, presence, and mental health (Bond & Hayes, 2002; Ramaci et al., 2019).

#### **f. Gaining Wisdom**

All subjects have their own meanings when facing the Covid-19 pandemic situation. The meaning in the subject is obtained by the subject in the form of positive meaning obtained during the pandemic. All subjects explained that with the pandemic, everything has wisdom and has a positive impact on themselves. The sample of subject's statement below:

*"Just learned from the pandemic. Especially for clean and healthy habits. I thought so far, Indonesian people forget about these healthy habits that we need for basic human's life." – S1*

*"Positive things that I have got from the pandemic, increased my willingness to learn, because I was too curious about how to solved my problems during pandemic..." – S3*

#### **g. The Desire to Become a Better Version of Oneself**

When facing the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to the acquisition of wisdom, the four subjects also have a desire to become better selves in the future, according to the goals that each adheres to. As in S1, who wants to educate morals in his students and become a servant of the nation, S2 wants to make students happy and comfortable when learning. S2 also

remembers Allah at all times, S3 which is shown by his unyielding attitude and wants to continue to *upgrade* himself, and S4 who wants to be an example teacher for other teachers. The sample of subject's statement can be seen below:

*"My willingness to learn increased. This ability impactful for the school, for the students. Despite any obstacles we faced during pandemic..." – S3*

*"As a teacher here, I have to be the best teacher, for being example for others..." – S4*

According to the psychological flexibility, if an individual has psychological flexibility, he will be able to found meaning of life and events he faced. So, this in line with their life satisfaction (Hayes et al, 2004; Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010; Arslan & Allen, 2021).

### **The Factors influencing Psychological Flexibility Among Elementary Schools Teachers in The Rural**

These themes are supported by factors including teaching commitment, motivation, creativity, and social support. These factors are explained as follows:

#### **1) Commitment to Teaching**

The four subjects showed a commitment to teaching in dealing with the situation during the Covid-19 pandemic. The form of teaching commitment is shown in the various ways that subjects do to keep learning effectively. These methods are pursued and become a solution when facing the Covid-19 pandemic problem. In S1, for example, although learning during the pandemic using online media has not been satisfactory, the subject still strives for



effective learning by opening the *YouTube* channel as a learning medium. In S2, during the pandemic S2 experienced obstacles in the field of technology. Therefore, S2 learns to be able to overcome these obstacles, until S2 is able to keep up with technological developments to be used as learning media. In S3 and S4, the commitment to continue teaching is shown in the unyielding attitude of contacting students to stay connected to access learning. The teaching commitment of subjects are shown below:

*"When I saw the obstacles in front of me and maybe the other teachers too who did not know about technology, I looked for the technology training..."*  
– S2

*"...the point is whatever media used for the school materials, even the pandemics got in our way, teachers should make it sure students can still learn with excitement"* – S3

Commitment is a complex attitude that is potentially influenced by group behaviors and depends on the context with individual functions (Thien & Razak, 2014). Teaching commitment during Covid-19 pandemic was found on Istiqomah et al (2022) research. The results with some school strategies during pandemics, the teacher has good in teaching commitment. Teaching commitment goes hand in hand with several positive aspect in individuals psychological. Mukhtar et al (2021) explained that good teaching commitment and efficacy of had an effect on teacher satisfaction at work, in elementary school in Malaysia's settings.

Other findings are from Biglan et al (2013) in his research on psychological flexibility for teachers with special needs,

teaching commitment occurs when individuals are able to control thoughts and feelings. If teachers are able to control thoughts and feelings, teaching commitment remain strong, so the teacher can be more flexible. When teachers are more flexible, they can more enjoy about their thoughts and feelings. Flexibility helps teachers better in behave according to achieving their goals (Biglan., et al 2013).

## **2) Motivation**

The next factor underlying the emergence of psychological flexibility in elementary school teachers in the rural during the pandemic is motivation. All subjects have motivation in their lives as educators. The motivation possessed by the subject has various variations according to the goals adopted by the subject. In S1, he has the motivation to want to become a servant of the state who can advance the morals of the nation's children, S2 has the motivation to continue to get closer to the creator in order to be a good teacher for his students to emulate. In S3 and S4, it is shown by the enthusiasm to learn new things such as newly recognized applications in learning media. Motivation factor are shown by subject's quoted below:

*"I had to be servant of nations by advancing the moral values of student in this nation, that's my goal. So, I had to be a better person in each day, and had a good moral on me."* – S1

## **3) Creativity**

Creativity in each subject is shown as the discovery of alternative problem solving as a solution so that teaching and learning activities during the pandemic can still be carried out. The form of creation in



problem solving to face the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic is different for each subject. In S1, the form is to create a YouTube channel as an additional online learning media, even though previously S1 did not know how to manage YouTube at all. In S2, S2 also applies online learning media through inviting students to read news literacy from the internet. In S3 and S4, the creativity varies in making videos, *Power Point*, and posters with the Canva application. The subject's statement about creativity factors quoted below:

*"For my students, I opened my own YouTube channel too for the media to make school material's access easier to learn" – S1*

*"For learning medias using Power Point, then I recorded my voice there and insert it to my Power Point materials. This action I took to the aim to make materials explanations better" – S3*

The results are in line with Oktiani (2017) research which explains that creative teachers can develop their abilities, new ideas, and new ways of teaching. In order to encourage teacher creativity, efforts should have by both the principal in the form of supervision, coaching, and development, giving rewards, and creating a pleasant working atmosphere at school. Creativity can contribute to adaptive prospects by increasing processes related to psychological flexibility (Forgard & Elstein, 2014) which is defined as the ability to adapt one's cognition effectively, emotion, and behave to the events (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). Furthermore, Forgard and Elstein (2014) explained that someone who is able to think creatively promotes

psychological flexibility and reduces psychopathological mental distress.

#### **4) Social Support**

The results of psychological flexibility in the subject are influenced by social support factors among colleagues as teachers. All subjects revealed that every day, both during the pandemic and non-pandemic, they struggled together. This was expressed by S1. S2 also felt the same support, especially when having difficulty accessing technology. Before the training provided by the government, S2 was assisted by his friends to learn about technology in order to adjust to the conditions during the pandemic. In S3 and S4, both revealed that if their friends had difficulties, they would help each other and collaborate together with other friends. The subject's social support motivation shown below:

*"During a pandemic, we are all as colleagues live it sincerely, whether the situations are easy or hard, we got this together." – S1*

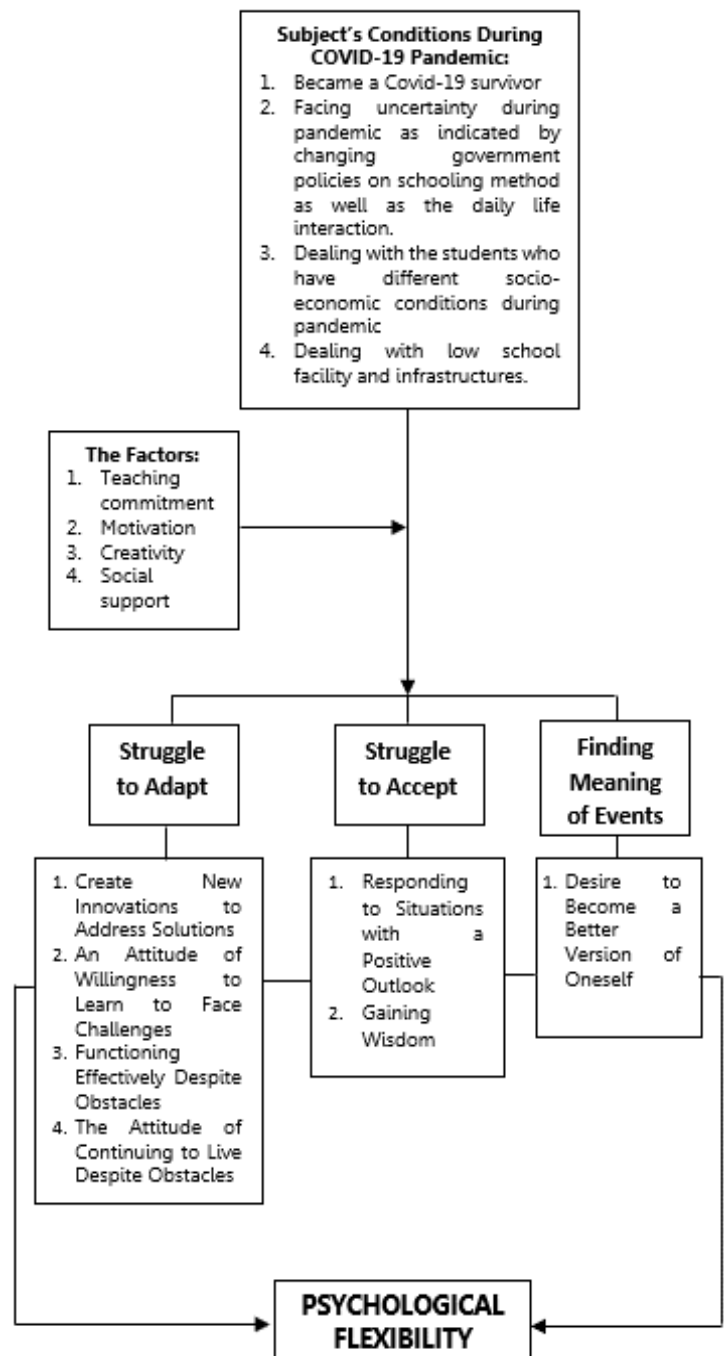
*"As a colleague, I gave my friend training to increase technology skills. We also shared our condition together to give each other supports." – S4*

Social support from family, friends, and colleagues can act as a buffer between stressful events and negative feelings. When someone feels supported, they are more likely to experience a higher quality of life and lower stress (Chao, 2012; Tindle & Moustafa, 2021). Having a strong social support network from family and friends can increase our perception of how well we can cope with the pandemic events and improve mental health.

In contrast, without social support individuals may feel as if they do not have the resources to deal effectively with situations and experience poorer mental health (Tindle & Moustafa, 2021). On the Covid-19 pandemic situations, support from family and friends diminishes as strict social distancing limits the number of people who can visit a household. This may indicate that mental health can deteriorate if individuals do not have social access to help protect against the negative psychological impacts that may increase during Covid-19 (Tindle & Moustafa, 2021).

Social support and psychological flexibility can reduce the effects of Covid-19 on psychological stress and mental health (Tindle & Moustafa, 2021). Furthermore, social support facilitates a higher psychological flexibility. Psychological flexibility indirectly reduces psychological distress by reducing avoidant coping and promoting more effective coping strategies (Tindle, Hemi, & Moustafa, 2022).

**Figure 1.** Description of Psychological Flexibility of Elementary School Teachers in the Rural



Overall, these results explain that the existence of Covid-19 pandemic which has hampered the situation in this world, has not prevented the subjects who are elementary school teachers in the rural from remaining empowered and functioning effectively in accordance with





the construct of psychological flexibility. Psychological flexibility has a tendency to respond to situations by following valuable personal goals (Doorley et al., 2020). In order to obtain psychological flexibility, individuals need to go through 6 processes in the psychological flexibility component by Hayes et al (2006). These components include present moment focus, self as context, cognitive defusion, acceptance, and commitment to action.

Psychological flexibility is rooted in Western theory which is the goal of achieving the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Hayes et al., 2006). In this study, the findings of different results are contained in the themes found in as the results of this study. These themes include adaptive, acceptance, and meaning of events. The theme of acceptance is the same as that described in one of the components of psychological flexibility described by Hayes (2006).

## CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted all aspects in human's life. Even though it changed the entire existing order, this condition did not hinder the subject who were elementary school teachers in the rural setting with minimum facilities and infrastructure. All obstacles during the hard and challenging life time situation within the pandemic were sincerely faced and overcame, with what we recognize it as psychological flexibility. Pandemic situation even made all the subjects to have a new enthusiasm to support their personal goals as teachers, to achieve better scores in completing the

status of "Pilot School of Tegal Regency". The students' achievement in gaining competencies score was also rooted from the commendable attitude of these teachers.

The limitation in this study is the relatively small number of the consent subject involved, due to the very tight academic calendar. The next research supposed to involving more subjects, for having robust data.

For the Government of Indonesia, pandemic covid-19 taught every people in the setting of basic academic world about the importance of facilities and infrastructures for students' learning. After the pandemic, on line learning is becoming more and more popular and frequently chosen by teachers, to avoid any late deliverability of learning material due to any obstacles in the field. This study also highlights and appeal for appreciation and improvement of support for teachers in difficult setting such as rural area.

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