

Improving Psychological Well-being of Adolescents through Character Strength Training

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Abstract---

Purpose: *This study aims to determine the effectiveness of character strength training in improving youths' psychological well-being.*

Methodology: *This study applied a quasi-experimental method with a pretest-posttest control group design involving 40 participants of SMPN 1 Ambarawa as experimental and control groups. The data collection method used a psychological well-being scale adapted from the Ryff scales of psychological well-being. The participants were adolescents aged 12-15 years and had low and moderate level of psychological well-being selected through screening. The hypothesis is character strength training can improve psychological well-being of adolescent.*

Result: *Based on Independent T-Test, the result shows that the hypothesis is approved. The experimental group reached a mean value of 29.25 and the control group reached a value of 11.90 with a significance (2-tailed) value of 0,000 <0.005. Then, the value of the t-count was 6,009> while the value of the t-table was 2,024. In the experimental group, the Paired Sample T-Test showed a mean value of 146.60 and 175.70 for the post-test with a significance (2-tailed) = 0,000 <0.005 and the t-test result reached 12,666> with the t-table value of 2,093. Character strength training is effective to increase psychological well-being of adolescent.*

Keywords--- *Improving Psychological, Character Strength Training, Psychological Well-being.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Human is a creature which is considered has multiple aspects, namely physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects. Well-being is crucial for individual because well-being is the manifestation of functions of all those aspects. They have to be considered greatly, particularly psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being is the relationship between aspects of self-acceptance both positive and negative, independence, environmental control in social life, ability to build good relationships among people, possess life goals and willingness to realize them and develop their potential (Dogde and Sanders, 2012). Individuals with high psychological well-being are characterized by being able to accept themselves as they are, able to build warm relationships with other people, being independence in dealing with social pressure, able to control the external environment, have goals and able to realize and continue developing their potential (Ryff et al, 2008).

Psychological well-being can be felt by every individual including teenager who is on the development process to reach mental maturity (Hurlock, 2011). To fulfill their development stage, they have to possess good

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psychological well-being and the level of psychological well-being of each individual is different. It can be high, moderate, or low depending on the optimal functioning of their personal aspects (Ryff et al., 2008)

Based on the result of a study conducted by Prabowo (2016), the level of students' (youth) psychological well-being is still in the low and medium category as it only reached 76% (moderate category) in SMK Muhammadiyah in Malang. Most of the lowest percentage is in the aspect of personal growth meaning that many students are not optimal in developing their potential. Syarifudin and Prabowo (2015) found that the psychological well-being in the aspect of independence (autonomy) reached a value of 24.9% (low category) in 7 MTs in Malang and the aspect of positive relations with other reached 33.2% (low category). A total of 79 youths (26.7%) have no academic and non-academic achievement and only 62 youths (20.9%) have academic achievements. It means that youth with no achievements is higher compared to those with achievements.

Another study conducted by Fitri, Luawo, and Noor, (2017) found that 165 out of 303 teenage boys has moderate psychological well-being with a value of 54.45% and the low category experienced by 47 teenagers with a value of 15.51%. Aspects with low categories cover personal development and positive relationships with other people. It implies that the number of teenagers with a moderate level of psychological well-being is higher compared to those with a high level of psychological well-being. Based on the elaboration above, low psychological well-being affects youth's academic achievement.

The same phenomenon occurred in SMPN 1 Ambarawa, particularly classes 8D and 8F. Particularly, interviews and observations were conducted in the class 8D for four days (February 12 – 15, 2019) for obtaining preliminary data to identify issues regarding students/adolescents' psychological well-being. The result showed that they had low psychological well-being. It was based on low fighting power, motivation, optimism, initiative, and delinquency at school as well as low academic and non-academic achievements compared to other classes. These phenomena need more attention particularly from the school as students' psychological well-being contributes to achievement. It means psychological well-being will be energy for achievement and it encourages positive emotion to face challenges. This positive emotion can provide opportunities for students' potential so that they can give their best performance in learning (Hurlok, 2011). Factors affecting psychological well-being are education level, demographic factors, personality, social support, gender, cultural age, and religiosity (Ryff and Singer, in Keyes, 2013). Psychological well-being is required so that individuals can increase the effectiveness in various aspects including success in the academic field. The psychological well-being can be improved through character strengthen training. The character strength is defined as a positive trait including virtue, which is a good character showed by an individual to face a situation or condition in the environment (situational themes). Peterson & Seligman (2004) proposed six virtues showed by 24 character strengths such as wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity and love, humanity and love, justice, self-control (temperance), and transcendence.

The character strength supports well-being and leads to positive emotions, the meaning of life, achievement, and better relationships (Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2011) and it affects the psychological well-being. Based on a study conducted by Park, Peterson, and Seligman in 2004 concerning "Character strength and well-

being" involving 5,299 people using three VIA-IS internet samples revealed that life satisfaction is affected by aspects/virtues covering character strength and hope, citizenship, gratitude, love, and curiosity.

Another evidence from a study conducted by Wijayanti and Fivi (2010). They found that there was a relationship between character strength and well-being among Javanese. Javanese have a high level of happiness (well-being). It was significantly influenced by character strength with 48.6%. Seven character strengths contribute most to happiness or psychological well-being, such as perseverance and vitality of the virtue of courage, creativity, curiosity, and perspective of wisdom and knowledge virtue, justice of justice virtue, and forgiving /compassion of self-control virtue.

Concerning the authenticity of this study, some previous studies investigated the relationship between character strength and psychological well-being. The Psychologist Team of the University of Zurich found that character strength affects adults' (students) happiness. The result of the study regarding "Training Character strengths makes you happy" theme revealed that character strength training encourages curiosity, gratitude, optimism, humor and enthusiasm, and increasing life satisfaction of participants (Proyer, Ruch and Buschor 2013). The difference with the current study is the subject and training. The training conducted by Proyer et al only used some character strengths with different treatments for two experimental groups. Meanwhile, the current study arranged training of the six virtues of character strength.

Another experiment study which aims to identify the effect of character strength on reducing the students' procrastination level (Visser, Schoonenboom & Korthagen, 2017). The differences were on the dependent variable and research subjects. The studied conducted by Visser et al, concerned about procrastination, but the current study examines the psychological well-being as the dependent variable.

Based on the previous studies above, both quantitative and experiment, it is clear that the current study has never been conducted before. The researcher developed the result of the previous studies to make the character strength as a training to improve youth's psychological well-being.

Based on the elaboration of the background and previous studies, the researcher interested to conduct a study concerning the improvement of youth's psychological well-being through character strengths training. The hypothesis in this study are:

H1: there is a significant difference in psychological well-being between experiment group and control group,

H2: there is a positive effect of character strength training on improving psychological well-being in adolescents.

II. METHOD

This study is an experimental research with Quasi Experiment design it is Pre-test Post-test Control Group Design. This design was used to compare two groups of participants (Yuwono and Pratisti, 2018). The use of this design is because this design is exploratory which can determine the effect of independent variables on the dependent variables on the experimental group and the presence of a control group to see the comparison (Setiani, Yulianto and Setiadi, 2005). This design was carried out by making two groups consisting of the experimental group and the control group which would be given a Pre-Test measurement followed by treatment. The treatment was in

the form of character strength training in the experimental group, while the control group did not receive the treatment. Then, a Post-Test measurement was given. Both of these measurements aim to compare changes in the Pre-Test and Post-Test results due to the treatment and the presence of a control group to compare the differences in groups given the treatment and without the treatment. The variables in this study are psychological well-being as the dependent variable and character strength training as the independent variable.

Participants in this study were 40 students who met the criteria set by the researcher: (1) early adolescents of 12-15 years old, (2) having screening results of psychological well-being in the low and moderate categories, (3) willing to attend character strength training by signing an informed consent in accordance with the requirements of the standard code of ethics (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Zechmeister, 2007). Determination of the subject uses nonprobability sampling techniques, which is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique based on the goals set by the researcher (Arikunto, 2010). The more detailed or explicit the description of the sample members associated with the description of the members of the population, the more convincing that the chosen samples are truly represent the members of the population (Yunus, 2010).

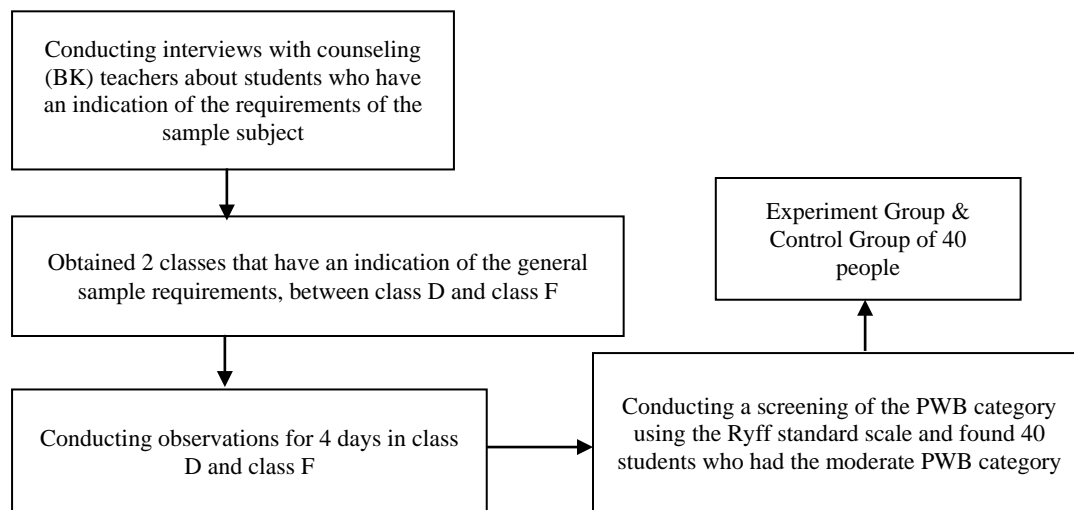


Figure 1: Procedure for Determining Research Samples

The researcher conducted interviews continuously with the counseling (BK) teachers to look for classes that have the possibility of moderate psychological well-being. Based on the interview results, it was found 2 classes consisting of 8D and 8F with a total of 57 students. In order to strengthen the results, the researcher conducted observations for 4 days which then carried out screening to find out the psychological welfare category of the 57 students. After the screening, it was found 40 students who had psychological well-being in the moderate category. The predetermined sample was divided into two groups randomly consist of the experimental group that was given treatment in the form of character strength training with a total of 20 students and the control group that was not given treatment with a total of 20 students. The experimental group and the control group consisted of 14 students aged 13 years and 26 students aged 14 years. Then, the 20 subjects in the experimental group consisted of 11 male students and 9 female students; while the 20 subjects in the control group consisted of 13 male students and 7 female students. The category of psychological well-being is arranged based on the norms of categorization levels (ordinal),

which is the classification of 3 categories of Azwar (2012) by making the mean and theoretical standard deviation as follows:

Category		
$X < (\text{Mean} - 1\text{SD})$:Low
$(\text{Mean} - \text{SD}) < X < (\text{Mean} + 1\text{SD})$:Medium
$X > (\text{Mean} + 1\text{SD})$:High

Figure 2: Category Score Formula (Azwar, 2012)

Table 1: Sample screening result

Score	Number of Subjects	Mean	Std. Deviation
Screening	57	126	28.00

Based on the formula of the score category above, the score refers to the distribution of the Mean value of 154 and the standard deviation value of 28.00. Thus, we get the reference score category as follows:

Category		
$X < (42)$:Low
$(42) < X < (94)$:Medium
$(94) > X > (154)$:High

Figure 3: Dermination of Categorization Scores

Table 2: Range of Screening Scores

Kategori skor			
Rendah	Sedang		Tinggi
42	98	154	210

The data collection method in this study uses a psychological well-being scale adapted from the Ryff scales of psychological well-being. The psychological well-being scale of this study consists of 42 items which are formed into two parts, consisting of the pre-test and post-test scales, where both parts use the same blueprint, but there are differences between the pre-test and post-test, which is in the writing/statement although they have the same context. The difference between the sentence writing between pre-test and post-test aims to minimize the threat of validity to the results of the study (Pratisti and Yuwono, 2018) because the provision of pre-test and post-test is given on the same day. Examples of sentence writing differences in the pre-test statement item 7 are “The decision I made is not influenced by what others say” and in the post-test statement item 7 “The decision I made is purely my own decision”. The psychological well-being scale has passed the Expert & Judgment conducted by the lecturer of the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta with a score range between 0.66 for the lowest and 0.91 for the highest, which means that there are no items that unqualified and all items have fulfilled the content

validity. Then, the scale was tested (Try Out) to 40 students taken randomly to determine the reliability with alpha cronbach pre-test of 0.78 and post-test of 0.91 where a scale is said to be reliable if the value of alpha cronbach is greater than 0, 60 and the closer to 1, the better the reliability.

Character strength training procedures refer to the character strength modules compiled by the researcher which have passed expert judgment to meet the criteria of content validity and effectiveness of training. This training has 6 sessions that are adjusted by 6 virtue of character strengths in which each session consists of delivering material, simulation, and filling out worksheets. The following is a series of character strength training rundown:

- 1) Opening, consisting of prayer, introduction of facilitators and filling out informed consent
- 2) Pre-test filling in the experimental and control groups
- 3) In the experimental group, a treatment was given in the form of character strength training, and a treatment was not given in the control group
- 4) Session 1 training, which is Wisdom and Knowledge material
- 5) Session 2 training, which is Perseverance material
- 6) Ice Breaking
- 7) Session 3 training, which is Humanity and Affection material
- 8) Session 4 training, which is Justice material
- 9) Break time (rest, pray, lunch)
- 10) Session 5 training, which is Temperance material
- 11) Session 6 training, which is Transcendence material
- 12) Post-test scale filling in the experimental group and the control group
- 13) Closing and going home.

Table 3: The Training Design

No.	Competency	Basic Materials	Learning Activities	Indicators of Achievement	Method
Session 1 <i>Wisdom & Knowledge: Millennial</i>	Providing participants with knowledge and understanding of <i>Millennial</i> , both the positive and negative characteristics.	Providing guidance on how to be a student who understand the positive side of technology and be wise in addressing the development of technology.	Participants follow the flow of lecture delivered by the speaker. Participants fill out the provided worksheets.	Able to understand the positive and negative sides in addressing the development of technology mediated by discussion and worksheets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videos about millennial Lecture of millennial Filling out the worksheets Allocated time: 40 minutes
Session 2 <i>Perseverance: Craft from cardboard</i>	Building consistency, to maintain success, and to overcome challenges coming from the individuals' internal and external sides.	Providing guidance on how to be consistent and motivated students in running all the dynamics of education at schools.	Participants follow the flow of lecture delivered by the speaker. Participants fill out the provided	Able to understand the importance of consistency and motivation in addressing all the issues at schools mediated by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecturer Simulation of craft from cardboard Filling out the worksheets Allocated time: 40

No.	Competency	Basic Materials	Learning Activities	Indicators of Achievement	Method
			worksheets. Fun Games Simulation.	worksheets and fun games.	minutes
Session 3 <i>Humanity and affection: Are you happy or sad?</i>	Stimulating students to perform and maintain interpersonal relationships. Building humanity and affection towards others.	Providing guidance on the importance of maintaining social relationships and how to respect others at schools.	Participants follow the flow of lecture delivered by the speaker. Participants fill out the provided worksheets. Fun Games Simulation.	Able to understand the importance of maintaining social relationships and how to respect others at schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos about caring others • Lecture • Simulation • Presentation and filling out worksheets <p>Allocated time: 60 minutes</p>
Session 4 <i>Justice: Self Building</i>	Building interaction between groups related to giving tasks and responsibilities in accordance with each group member's ability as individuals	Providing guidance on the importance of justice and suitability in social skills and tasks.	Participants follow the flow of lecture delivered by the speaker. Participants fill out the provided worksheets. Fun Games Simulation.	Able to understand the importance of justice and suitability in social skills and assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Simulation • Presentation and filling out worksheets <p>Allocated time: 60 minutes</p>
Session 5 <i>Temperance: Don't Overdo</i>	Developing students' attitudes to think first before doing something to avoid the negative impact and to think of its consequences.	Providing guidance on how to think first (self-control) before doing something to avoid the negative impact and to think of its consequences.	Participants follow the flow of lecture delivered by the speaker. Participants fill out the provided worksheets. Fun Games Simulation.	Able to understand both good and bad consequences of the action done.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Simulation • Presentation and filling out worksheets <p>Allocated time: 60 minutes</p>
Session 6 <i>Transcendence: Be Grateful</i>	Building students' ability to develop relationship between individuals and nature (spiritual) and how the individuals give meanings to their life.	Provide guidance on how to be grateful for both physical and psychological conditions as well natural condition.	Participants follow the flow of lecture delivered by the speaker. Participants fill out the provided worksheets. Fun Games Simulation.	Able to understand the importance of being grateful for their physical and psychological condition as well as natural condition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video about being grateful • Lecture • Simulation • Presentation and filling out worksheets <p>Allocated time: 60 minutes</p>

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Normality test on psychological well-being has Kolmogorov-Smirnov Sig value of 0.168 which means that the data distribution is normal because it has a value of more than 0.05/ >0.005 . Thus, it can be concluded that the data is normal because it has a normality value above 0.05. Homogeneity test of the experimental group has a Levene Sig value of 0.094 which means that the data obtained are homogeneous because it has a value of more than 0.005/ >0.005 .

The researchers use the Parametric analysis test because it has fulfilled the assumption test requirements, which are normal and homogeneous data. This study uses the statistical technique of Independent T-test to test the difference between the experimental group with the control group and the Paired sample T-test to find out the difference in the average of two samples which are in pairs, including the Pre Test and Post Test in the experimental group.

Table 4: Independent T-Test Results (post test of experimental and control group)

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2- tailed)
Experiment	29.25	10.371	0.000
Control	11.90	7.691	

The results of the Independent T-test show that there are differences in psychological well-being scores in the experimental and control groups. In the experimental group, the mean is seen at 29.25 after the treatment, while the control group shows a mean of 11.90 without any treatment. In addition, the score differences that occurred between the experimental and control groups are significant because the Sig. (2- tailed) of 0.000 is smaller than ($p, 0.05$), which means that the hypothesis is 1 accepted. There are significant differences in the level of psychological well-being in the experimental group compared to the control group.

Table 5: Paired Sample T-Test Result (pretest and post test in experiment group)

Variabel	Mean	N	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	146.60	20	.000
Post-test	175.70		

Based on the results of paired sample t-test, the mean value of the pre-test is 146.60 and the mean value of the post-test is 175.70. This indicates an increase (addition) from the pre-test value to the post-test value in the experimental group. Furthermore, the value of Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.000 is smaller than ($p < 0.05$), which means that there is a significant increase. It can be concluded that the hypothesis 2 is accepted. There is an increase in the level of psychological well-being between pre-test and post-test. Then, it can be concluded that there is a significant effect in the character strength training to improve psychological well-being.

Based on the results of data analysis, this study shows that character strength training has a significant effect on improving psychological well-being in Grade VIII students of SMPN1 Ambarawa. This is influenced by the virtue of character strength that influences the psychological well-being aspect, in which the Self Acceptance aspect is influenced by virtue of Transcendence (Session 6) which emphasizes gratitude in which the subject is asked to foster

gratitude for everything that has and is happening and asked to be sure of positive things that are owned to always be developed and grateful for. This will foster a positive attitude and acceptance of the self because gratitude is one of the factors that influence psychological well-being where gratitude is a form of positive personality and is presented to be more positive. Besides, gratitude has a positive relationship with satisfaction and passion for life and happiness (Wood, Joseph & Maltby, 2009)

In the positive relations with others aspect, it is influenced by the virtue of humanity and affection (Session 3) which is described as building interpersonal relationships that emphasize the attitude of empathy, compassion, and caring so that they can adapt well in their environment. Simulations in this training are also formed in groups that will foster sharing and build a social support system for each subject. In addition, the grouping and discussion form a togetherness, altruism (virtue towards others) and understanding one another so as to bring out a social support for each other (Prawitasari, 1992), which then will improve psychological well-being because social interactions with psychological well-being have a positive relationship (Bauer, Wilkie, Kim, Bodenhausen, 2012).

The next aspect which is also influenced by the strength of character is independence (autonomy) which is influenced by the virtue of perseverance (Session 2) which emphasizes perseverance and honing the subject's ability to consider and solve a problem. Both of these things can project the subject in terms of independence that is characterized by being able to make their own decisions. As stated by Peterson & Seligman (2004), individuals who have high perseverance show the characteristics of completing work for which they are responsible and are happy even though they encounter obstacles and difficulties so as to increase autonomy (independence) in the individuals.

Next, the personal growth aspect is influenced by the virtue of wisdom and knowledge (Session 1) which is filled with material of understanding and things that must be prepared by the millennial generation and tells the success and failure of the subjects. Then, they are encouraged to be optimistic concerning the achieved successes and failures that have been experienced in order to foster self-confidence, optimism to develop self-potential so as to enhance personal growth. This is also proofed by the results of Scheier's (2001) study which shows that optimists have higher levels of well-being.

The next is the environmental mastery aspect which is influenced by the virtue of Justice (Session 5), which is based on the power of leadership, justice and becoming part of the group. In this session, the simulation is divided into 4 groups with different types of tasks that must be completed. From the observations during the simulation, the subjects actively worked together to complete their group assignments. Even though they were from different classes, but the subjects looked easily familiar and it did not become obstacles to keep working together. This session aims to hone the ability to manage and regulate their environment, be able to adjust to social environmental conditions and be able to utilize the environment well so that individuals can improve their psychological well-being as shared by Gustemns and Calderon's research (2014). One of the character strengths that most influences psychological well-being is justice. Based on the study by Hausler, et al. (2017), the environmental mastery aspect is most strongly influenced by virtue of wisdom and knowledge, which is the power of curiosity and the virtue of courage, which is the strength of persistence character, the virtue of humanity, which is the power of love and the virtue of transcendence, which is the power of spirituality.

The last is the purpose in life aspect. This aspect is influenced by several virtues because almost all training sessions aim to encourage the subject to think, feel, and act positively, foster a sense of optimism both in the past and the future. Virtues that influence this aspect are virtue of wisdom and knowledge (Session 1), virtue of spirituality/transcendence (Session 6) and virtue of courage/determination (Session 2) and virtue temperance (simplicity). As stated by Seligman (2002), the purpose of life will be increased when someone applies the character strength in an individual where a person can forgive and accept the past (gratitude forgiveness), then undergo with full attention (flow, mindfulness), and optimism towards the future (optimism, hope).

This study aims to introduce that every individual has the character strength as a tool for living a life that will improve psychological well-being. After the individual knows their character strength, then reflects and applies it in everyday life, then using the character strength no longer for habitualizing (doing), but the way of being, and in the end the individual will achieve authentic happiness-*audaimonia*-well-being that is happiness and prosperity (Arif, 2016).

Based on this explanation above, it can be concluded that there is an effect of character strength training so that it affects the improvement of psychological well-being in Grade VII students of SMPN 1 Ambarawa.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis and explanation of this study, the conclusions are:

- a) There is a significant influence of character strength training on the psychological well-being of students
- b) There is a significant difference of psychological well-being between the experimental group that is given character strength training and the control group without treatment.

Based on the research results, suggested to the participants who have participated in character strength training to apply the training materials in daily life and always assess themselves as positive individuals. For the school, regarding school learning methods, it should be varied and interesting in order to increase students' motivation, especially in the academic field. Furthermore, suggestions for parents are expected to always pay attention to the children, especially the strengths possessed by children. This will make the children to experience growth and development into a more confident and optimistic individuals.

For further researchers, they are expected to develop and cover up technical errors contained in the character strength training modules, such as the addition of simulations and group work patterns in learning. They should also test the module on different subjects other than adolescents who have been tested by the researcher. Future researchers can also replicate this research with various variations and improvements. Variations can be made by designing training modules to be more interesting and communicative and the duration of the training are added so that the material provided is more optimal for the subject to understand it. The next researchers are also expected to be able to control other variables that are not related to the research, so that clear results from the training modules that are being developed can be identified.

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