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Gilligan-In-Action: Assisting undergraduates' holistic development through the element of care

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Received: 16 May 2022 Revised: 25 May 2022 Accepted: 30 July 2022 Published: 1 September 2022</p>	<p>The millennial generation might lack the understanding of relationships and care in the effort to develop holistically during their period of learning in the university. As such, this article probes into students' voices in understanding their predicaments faced during the times of pandemic and how Gilligan's perspectives can assist them in facing life struggles as a student. The researchers conducted a preliminary analysis before having a semi structured interviews with ten purposively selected students who voluntarily participated in this case study. The interview transcripts were carefully transcribed and coded before generating meaningful themes that could highlight the needs of the students. The emerging themes from the study suggest that students were struggling with financial issues, emotional well-being at home, assignment loads and house chores. The implication of this study can aid various university department and entities namely the students' affairs department, the student's council and respective course instructors in embedding the element of care and positive relationships in dealing with undergraduates.</p>
<p>Keywords: Gilligan, Care, Holistic development, Undergraduates</p>	

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education has an important role in promoting growth, alleviating poverty, and increasing shared prosperity. It benefits not just the individual, but also the entire educational system. Tertiary education serves society overall, not only the self (Kromydas, 2017). Graduates of postsecondary education are

more ecologically sensitive, have better habits, and participate in civic activities to a greater degree (Idris et al., 2012). In the effort to promote better education, governments are continuously realising that the whole educational system, from early childhood to higher education, need to be reengineered (Verdolini et al., 2021). It must reflect the emerging social and economic needs of the global information economy, which requires a stronger, more competent, and flexible workforce. Young adult learners in higher education are always full of dilemmas (Jiang et al., 2021). Intrinsically motivated learners are generally unaffected in their learning since they require little supervision and assistance, but pupils who are deficient in learning have challenges. Some academically qualified students from low-income families are unable to access or afford online schooling (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). On the other hand, they also need support from various aspects in their life. Unfortunately, at times, their voices are unheard (Cunningham & Rious, 2015) and it invites other predicaments in life such as social ills (Bilsen, 2018). In support of them, lecturers need to understand these young adult learners and listen to their voices to bring out the best in them (Kristanto et al., 2020). As such, this paper intends to understand the struggles and dilemmas faced by university students during the pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Morality is a psychological term for a set of beliefs, values, and underlying judgments about the rightness or wrongness of actions. The conscience is a system of moral principles that has been internalised (Pizarro, 2000). Morality, according to Piaget (1970), is an individual's respect for social laws and sense of fairness, where justice is defined as a concern for reciprocity and equality among individuals. Piaget's moral development theory is based on his observations of youngsters playing marbles and involves developmental changes in thinking. Moral reasoning evolves dramatically from early childhood to adolescence, and these changes appear to be ordered and predictable, generally coinciding with developmental changes in thinking, according to Piaget. Kohlberg's phases theory, according to Gilligan, needs to include both a masculine and a female perspective (Mitten et al., 2018). Gilligan claims that men and women are taught various values as they grow up, and that while men and women develop differently, neither can be claimed to be morally matured more or less than the other.

Their moral duty places a premium on attachments, allows for both self-sacrifice and selfishness, and takes into account interpersonal relationships. While Kohlberg's morality of justice places a premium on liberty, norms, and legality, and prioritises the person. Neither viewpoint is superior, according to Gilligan and Attanucci (1982) rather, care and justice are compatible. As a result, it was decided to perform a research of male and female adolescent boys' and girls' moral growth in light of Gilligan's thesis. The study is also significant in Pakistan because there appears to be little research on the topic, particularly in terms of cross-cultural validation of the Moral Justification Scale in Pakistan (Khalid et al., 2020). Teachers of adolescent boys and girls will benefit from the findings of this study in strengthening religious and moral instruction for this age group.

Gilligan's theory can be used in tackling financial issues among students for example, in such uncertain times, teachers must figure out what they can do to keep children feeling protected. Lecturers must be aware of behavioural and mood changes among students as a starting step; they must also examine their own life, assess their own states of mind, and any changes in their conduct, mood, or patience level. According to the interview we conducted regarding this, there are 2 students who are struggling financially where they have to share their scholarship funds with their family. In simple context, apart from being a student, some of them are also carrying a huge financial burden as they are the only one with the source of money. This problem might cause a disturbance to their mental and will impact their performance and as a teacher we should provide extra support, loving, and calm if a child is experiencing financial or other types of instability at home (Jean-Baptiste et al., 2020). Teachers who know that certain parents are in the regrettable situation of being impacted by this worrisome financial storm are encouraged to offer families extra help.

Invitations to meet with career counsellors and other behavioural advisors individually or as featured speakers at a parent meeting can be quite helpful (Cauberghe et al., 2021). Sharing concerns might lessen the stress, provide useful leads for families, allow greater optimism, and some relief from worry,

freeing parents to focus on their children's concerns. Gilligan's theory suggests that female and males, their moral obligation places a premium on attachments, allows for both self-sacrifice and selfishness, and takes other people into account.

Other than providing extra support emotionally, providing assistance to direct them to the correct path of getting help, being alert to their behavioural activities, educational members should implement programmes or courses in managing financials as the chain of financial problems could be reduced. Educational members should propose a progressive approach to integrating financial education into the curriculum, suggesting first incorporating the subject as a voluntary one, and subsequently, when possible, as a mandatory horizontal topic in other courses. The government shall assist in the development of a financial education learning framework, taking into account the requirements of the education system to support the development and provision of materials to teachers as well as dedicated training to tackle these financial issues among students.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative holistic single case study (Yin, 2014) intended to probe into students' struggle during the remote learning period. The researchers were deeply interested in listening to the undergraduates' problems and they chose 10 female students. Gilligan's moral reasoning theory (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1982) underpinned this study as it posited the idea that care is the basis for moral reasoning adopted by female as opposed to Kohlberg who postulated that men and boys reasoning are based on justice. The researchers wanted to see how the reasoning is evident among the participants in this study by probing them with questions pertaining to financial management issues that they highlighted in the preliminary study that was sent out in the form of a survey.

Participants

A holistic single case study design was adopted in looking for the answers for the issues raised in this study. For that purpose, 10 students were purposively selected (Thomas, 2022) from the 84 respondents who answered the survey sent out to them. These participants were selected because they shared some interesting insights (Ames et al., 2019) on issues faced in learning during pandemic. The profile of the research participants is described in Table 1 below. Pseudonyms are employed in maintaining the confidentiality of the research participants (Kaiser, 2009).

Table 1

Profile of the participants

Name	Semester	Gender	Problems faced during pandemic
Yuha	3	Female	Emotional, financial
Nadia	4	Female	Financial
Alia	3	Female	Assignments, financial
Mages	3	Female	Emotional, financial
Siew Yin	3	Female	Assignments, financial
Leenisha	4	Female	Financial

Mardiana	4	Female	Emotional, financial
Susan	3	Female	Assignments, financial
Pik Ying	3	Female	Emotional, financial
Dermawati	3	Female	Assignments, financial

Most of the respondents in this study are first and second-year students, with a total percentage of 90.4%. These students are mainly visual and spatial, as well as auditory and musical learners. The four major problems encountered by students of both genders on home-based teaching and learning (PdPR) during the Malaysian Government Movement Control Order (MCO) were (1) doing housework while studying, (2) working while studying, e.g., being a foodpanda rider, and (3) an inconvenient environment at home while studying, e.g., sibling(s) disturbances, as well as financial issues.

Upon analysing the survey, the 10 participants agreed to participate in a series of interview semi-structured interviews whereby the researchers split themselves into three groups. During the interview which was carried out via WebEx conferencing platform which lasted for about two hours for each group, the participants joyously shared their concerns and struggles. They were probed with a set of protocol which was checked and commented by an expert in the area of Educational psychology. In an attempt to avoid researchers from controlling the interview, the researchers allowed the participants to question them and stop them anytime they feel inconvenient (Read, 2018). The interview protocol is listed in Table 2.

Table 2
Interview protocol

1	How are you coping with Covid-19 pandemic?
2	What is the most difficult struggle you face?
3	How can the lecturers/ university help you?
4	Do you like online learning? Why?

Using thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2013), the researchers coded the data in Atlas ti version 9 by first looking for repetitive phrases and sentences. Then, initial themes emerged from the codes and categories. These themes were then presented to an expert to comment and suggest. After the comments were taken into consideration, rephrasing was done to duly acknowledge the groups that fit into the themes before establishing them in the final report. Constant member checking with the participants was done to avoid the researchers' bias and misinterpretation as well as to follow closely ethical guidelines suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Four themes appeared from the analysis as reported in Table 3.

Table 3
Themes emerging from the study

Financial issues
Emotional wellbeing at home

Assignment loads

House chores

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Theme 1: Financial issues

When the students were asked about the struggles they faced during the remote learning period, financial issues were highlighted by mostly everyone.

“I had to share my PTPTN money with my siblings because my father lost his work (job).” (Pik Ying)

“My brother and I do food panda to support house income. My father died of Covid-19. Suddenly we lost income” (Alia)

“I do part time online tuition to support family salary because I don’t get full PTPTN.” (Siew Yin)

“My mother needed me to help sell nasi lemak daily at the market to add our family fund.” (Leenisha)

It is indeed a struggle and an added burden on the students to work as part timers to support the family in securing enough income for the continuation of their livelihood.

Theme 2: Emotional well-being at home

Four of them highlighted that they had to struggle with emotional issues such as loss of family members due to the pandemic, divorce among parents and also break ups with their girlfriends or boyfriends.

“I lost my mother to Covid-19. Now I am left alone because my father died when I was young and I am the only child in the family. It is terrifying to think of this.” (Yuha)

“My parents got divorced because my mother lost her job during the pandemic. My father could not take it and he left us.” (Dermawati)

“I am shy to tell this but it is OK. I broke up with my boyfriend because he could not see me. He did not answer my calls. It is really make me sad” (Mardiana)

Their emotional well-being was at stake and that made them feel unbearable to continue surviving during the pandemic.

Theme 3: Assignment loads

A few of them commented on the assignment loads that were overwhelming and put a huge stress on themselves.

“There are too many many assignments. Quiz, project and portfolio. Too many until I lost count” (Alia)

“I don’t think lecturers understand us. They think we stay at home do nothing. They give us weekly tasks that is so difficult and also assignment.” (Siew Yin)

“I am so angry because final exam changed to assignment and it became so many to do. If it is group work, it is still doable. Now all individual, I don’t have time” (Susan)

The load of assignment was overwhelming and made the students suffocate. They could not produce quality assignments resulting in a decline in their results.

Theme 4: House chores

The students also unanimously agreed that they were not spared from doing house chores. They had to wash clothes, dry them, cook, keep the house clean and tend to their younger siblings.

“My job is to cook daily and feed my siblings because my mother is working.” (Alia)

“I have to keep my house clean and wash clothes. It takes time and at times I am late for my online class” (Mages)

“My siblings are so annoying and they cling around me all the time. (Pik Ying)

The students had to manage everything when they stayed at home during the Movement Control Order.

DISCUSSIONS

Wahab and Othman (2021) described those students from different background have different financial issues to take care of during the pandemic. This is a grave concern during the pandemic and post pandemic that students need financial assistance to survive. Selvanathan et al. (2020) mentioned that students facing financial constraints resulting in them dropping out in studies and it is the role of the Ministry to tackle this issue. It is timely that the university provides financial management courses for them to learn and apply these tips in dealing with similar scenarios in future. This is also reported in the study by Jones et al. (2021) that students in the City University of New York had high levels of economic instability and reported loss of household income, concerns about housing, and food insecurity.

Subsequently, on the issue of students emotional-wellbeing, it was reported that mental cases were on the rise during the lock-down period according to Browning et al. (2021). This was an important information to be understood and tackled with care so that the students can be assisted and provided with needed help. In relation to this issue, Hassan et al. (2022) suggested that students' emotional

repercussions can be reduced by teaching them self-regulation through the use of internal and external learning process regulation. This effort should be made by teachers during the online classes by frequently motivating their students and checking on them and keeping an eye on the students' participation and engagement.

Students cannot avoid assignments because by embarking on the tasks assigned to them, they will pick up various skills. Unfortunately, during the pandemic, students are overwhelmed with assignments because most of the final examinations were replaced with alternative assessments and assignments. This finding is parallel with Motz et al. (2021) who claimed that students were thrown for a loop of a large number of tasks that appeared to have minimal value for their learning. It is not an advisable act to bombard students with assignments just because final examinations are replaced with other forms of assessments. It is the instructors' call to make to prepare and conduct meaningful assessment that integrates technology and fun in nature to ensure learning takes place in a non-threatening environment.

It is imperative to make students understand that they have roles to play at home (Reic et al., 2013) other than being a student, they are also someone else's children, brother, sisters and grandchildren. If they understand this concept, they will not whine when thrown in the situations as they described earlier. Goni-fuste et al. (2021) enlightened that in their study, during the pandemic, students fulfilled their moral obligations by volunteering or working, providing care services, and nursing unwell individuals in the neighbourhood. This is due to their prior volunteer experience, the availability of personal protective equipment (Natan et al., 2015), and understanding of the virus, its transmission, and pandemic management. The present pandemic emphasises the need of remaining open to alternative learning settings and activities that are still available despite lockdown constraints.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is essential to listen to our students' voices before we plan intervention activities to support their holistic development. Even though the pandemic has disrupted learning and affected many aspects of our lives, it is integral to look at the needs of our students so that they are not lost in the sea of struggles without support. After all, the biggest role of an educator is to support the development of their learners. In an effort to assist the students in the university to understand the concept proposed by Gilligan, there are various measures that can be adopted by the students' affairs department, the student's council and the course instructors. In this section, the researchers will elaborate the roles that can be assumed by these three parties in materializing the concept of moral reasoning that has been elaborated by Gilligan in her theory.

Students' Affairs Department

Since rules and regulations are set by the students' affairs department, element of relationship and care can be embedded in the rules. For instance, in cases of student drop-outs, dealing with them with care instead of harsh way would work with the students. Gilligan proposed that by offering and showing care, students will be able to see things from the authority's perspectives. Apart from that, moral discretion along with care can do better than harm on the students. It is undeniable that by being strict students will have some form of fear of committing mistakes in their matters with the students' affairs department, but with care, they will be able understand the repercussion of their misconduct and subsequently strive to improve their character.

Student's council

Subsequently, the student's council can also play an integral in embedding Gilligan's concepts in its programs with students. When care and focus on establishing good rapport and relationships are made the focus of the program, more students will benefit from it. For instance, by having a care-based service counter that offers immediate assistance to students in need, this will in return make the campus a positive climate for studying and living.

Course instructors

Primarily, it is hoped that all instructors view students from similar angle of how Gilligan had suggested. With this, course instructors will allow students to interact politely and mutual respect will be the basis for the interaction.

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