

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Strategies for Health College Students to Gain Academic Achievement in the Era of Blended Learning

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The pandemic has forced most activities from offline to switch to online systems, including in education. In the post-Covid-19 period, educational institutions began to develop a blended learning system. The aim of this study is to explore the learning strategies of outstanding students in a health college during the blended learning period. **Method:** The study used a qualitative descriptive approach in 4 focus group discussions with those who were outstanding students in the 2020/2021 academic year. The total students in this research are 29 people aged 21-25 years old. **Result:** The research found 5 themes, including 1) perception of learning achievement; 2) learning objective for outstanding students; 3) learning methods for outstanding students; 4) time management to study of outstanding students; and 5) motivator for outstanding students. **Conclusion:** Achievement strategies for students are they should take hard efforts in the learning process such as studying regularly, learning by repeating materials, making personal notes, verbalizing what is learned in front of others, mirror, and even talking to themselves. The student also felt difficult to capture the learning properly when the study runs online. The strategy they took is to adapt the accessibility of the internet network by using adequate devices with good operator providers. Unfortunately, the lesser interaction process with other students and lecturers they do, the lesser interest they felt to follow that classes. Online classes brought so many distractions that make students could not concentrate well in class. The findings show in order to become an outstanding student, strong self-motivation is needed to learn and be supported by the closest people such as parents.

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## INTRODUCTION

Learning is a process of human mental activity (1). Learning marks, a change in the behavior of individual learners, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Change as a result of learning is permanent and does not happen instantly. An effective learning process can be achieved if learning has activeness in designing and experiencing its own process which is called a learning experience. Good learning is when the learner experiences a process to understand the meaning and essence of the information he receives. Therefore, learning should be deep (deep learning) and not only on the surface (surface learning) (1).

Strategies of learning can be interpreted as learning behavior activities to gain new knowledge (1). Everyone has their own way of being able to learn effectively. The need for learning and one's learning methods are certainly different from one another. Everyone can determine their own way of learning effectively.

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced most activities from offline to switch to online systems, including activities in the field of education and learning. This requires adaptation that is not simple for both educators and students. Likewise, from the organizers or educational institutions, they are also required to prepare supporting facilities for the implementation of the online education process, including in the world of higher education. Infrastructure, training for educators, technical implementation, and educational institutions need to be developed to be able to overcome the condition of adding users' access to online learning (2).

In the post-Covid-19 pandemic, learning methods began to be developed from what was originally done entirely online, then began to be developed with face-to-face methods with restrictions on the number of student attendance. Educational institutions began to develop a blended learning system. Some students attend class, and the rest students can access learning from their respective homes. Even though online learning is also equipped with the development of video conferencing and web chat so that it is still possible for interaction between students and students, or students and their lecturers (3).

Even though they have to adapt to the learning process from what was originally carried out face-to-face, students have the motivation to continue to excel. According to Ilyas, 2008 (4), learning achievement is defined as the maximum effort achieved by a person in learning activities based on certain measurements. Thus, student learning achievement is the achievement obtained by students against the results of the efforts or efforts made during the learning process as measured by certain criteria

The purpose of this study was to obtain direct and in-depth information from outstanding students in the first, second, and third ranks in all classes in all study programs at a health college in Yogyakarta and how the strategies applied by students to achieve academic achievement in the era of blended learning.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Research Method**

The research was conducted using a qualitative method with a Focus group discussion (FGD) approach. This method serves to collect the perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, experiences, and practices of participants, sharing in the process of interaction with different people (5).

### **Samples**

The focus group was conducted on 29 outstanding students from the nursing and nutrition study programs, based on the determination of the institution's decision letter as outstanding students in the 2020/2021 academic year. FGD activities were carried out by dividing students into 4 groups. They discussed based on their respective study programs. In each group, there are outstanding students ranked 1st, 2nd, and 3rd from each study program. Discussion time ranged from 60-90 minutes for each group.

All FGD participants gave their consent to be digitally recorded and then the results were transcribed into words in the text that the researcher would review. All FGD processes were carried out by researchers who

were assisted by two research assistants who were tasked with taking notes and documenting the entire focus discussion process.

### **Ethical Clearance**

The research has got ethical clearance from Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan Panti Rapih Yogyakarta. Ethical number 057/KEPK.02.01/IV/2022 on 24 April 2023.

## **RESULTS**

From a total of 29 participants in four FGD groups, the following characteristics were obtained:

### **Characteristics of Group 1 FGD**

This FGD was attended by nine outstanding students from the Diploma of Nursing Study Program. The FGD group consisted of five (5) students, all of whom were female, with the age of the FGD participants in the first group ranging from 21 – 22 years. All FGD participants participated in the FGD process enthusiastically. Next, it will be called FGD1\_Participant 1-Participant 5 (FGD1\_P1-P5).

### **Characteristics of Group 2 FGD**

This FGD was attended by nine outstanding students from the bachelor Nutrition Study Program. The FGD group consisted of nine (9) students, all of whom were female, with the age of the FGD participants in the second group ranging from 21–23 years. All FGD participants participated in the FGD process enthusiastically. Next, it will be called FGD2\_Participant 1-Participant 9 (FGD2\_P1-P9).

### **Characteristics of Group 3 FGD**

This FGD was attended by nine outstanding students from the Nursing Undergraduate Study Program. The FGD group consisted of 12 students, with 1 male student and 11 female students, with the age of the FGD participants in this third group ranging from 21 – 23 years. All FGD participants participated in the FGD process enthusiastically. Next it will be called FGD3\_Participant 1-Participant 12 (FGD3\_P1-P12)

### **Characteristics of Group 4 FGD**

This FGD was attended by outstanding students from the Nursing Profession Study Program for the transfer program. This transfer program is a nursing education program for diploma graduate students who continue on to bachelor programs. The FGD group consisted of 3 students, all female, with the age of the FGD participants in this fourth group ranging from 22-25 years. All FGD participants participated in the FGD process enthusiastically. Next it will be called FGD4\_Participant 1-Participant 3 (FGD4\_P1-P3)

### **FGD Result**

The results of the FGD conducted to find out how the

learning strategies of outstanding students in higher education in Health are grouped into five themes, namely as follows:

### **The first theme: perceptions of learning achievement**

From the four FGD groups, two sub-themes were found to answer this question. The first sub-theme is learning achievement is the result of efforts achieved because they have done hard work so far, namely learning. This is as expressed by participants:

*'... the result of a person's hard work to learn so that he gets a definite achievement that has been determined'* (FGD3\_P3).

The participant's statement is appropriate that learning achievement is the maximum result that can be achieved by a person after making a learning effort (Waidi et al, 2019). In accordance with the perception of the participants in the FGD, the achievements they get are the result of the efforts they have made during the learning process.

The second sub-theme of students' perceptions of learning achievement is that achievement is something to be proud of, which is due to their hard work so that they get an award. This is as described by the participants as follows:

*'... something to be proud of from the effort that has been done finally gets a bonus and feels proud and more confident'* (FGD4\_P2)

### **The Second theme: learning objectives**

From the four FGD groups, it was known how outstanding students expressed their learning goals and it was found that there were four learning objectives. The first is learning to develop yourself by discovering new things. This is as expressed by participants:

*'... learning is to know and deepen knowledge'* (FGD1\_P2)

The second learning objective for these outstanding students is that they do not need to be remedial or repeat the exam because they do not pass. This day was expressed by the participants as follows:

*'... don't remedial or repeat during the exam, then you have to study'* (FGD2\_P3)

The third learning goal is to prepare for the future, not just looking for achievements. This is as expressed by the participants as follows:

*'My job is humanity to take care of people and I have to really understand the right way, not just look for rankings...'* (FGD 1\_P2)

The fourth learning goal is to learn to learn the science that is according to his choice. This was stated by participants:

*'Learn so that my dream can be achieved to become a professional nurse'* (FGD3\_P3)

### **The Third theme: learning methods for outstanding students**

Various methods used by outstanding students in learning include the first is learning by accessing videos, viewing and paying attention to learning videos. This is as expressed by participants:

*'... I like watching videos, ma'am.. especially now it's easy to get learning videos, if we want to practice, watch the video first, so I have more of an idea...'* (FGD 4\_P1).

The second learning method used by many outstanding students is as follows: making summaries and personal notes. This is as expressed by the participants as follows:

*'... from the ppt material that has been given by the lecturer and also I learned from my small notes'* (FGD1\_P4)

*'... or in lectures explaining how to rewrite and listen, then take notes, then reread.'* (FGD3\_P2)

The third learning method used by high-achieving students is rereading, marking, remembering, memorizing, making print-outs, and reviewing the material obtained. This method as expressed by the participants as follows:

*'... reviewing material or summaries that I continue to write from the lecturer and then I give colors...'* (FGD1\_P3)

*'... read existing notes or listen first, then take notes, then repeat the night again'* (FGD3\_P2)

The fourth method that is often used by high achieving students in learning is re-explaining what they have learned in front of a mirror or talking to themselves, explaining the material being studied, and presenting it in front of friends if someone asks. Some of the participants in the FGD revealed the following:

*'... explain again to others or to yourself too'* (FGD2\_P9)

*'... usually in the toilet while talking in front of the mirror, Mom, then I can understand.'* (FGD 2\_P2)

The fifth learning method used by outstanding students is to study individually, only in groups. They also revealed that group study is often a lot of distractions, because they talk more. Most of them prefer to study alone. This was expressed by several participants in the FGD as follows:

*'... I live in a dormitory with a lot of people, I studied independently first and then I tested my abilities for example my friend, I asked them to explain this, now if I can explain and they understand, it means I value*

*myself oh I can do it.* ' (FGD1\_P1 )

The sixth method used by outstanding students to study is to join the telegram group. This was expressed by one of the participants in the FGD as follows:

*'... join the telegram group which contains questions, especially nursing... it's fun because the model is when someone gives a question, we will choose A/B/C/D, later if the answer is correct, a gift will automatically come out, then get a comment from the students from other campus, so it makes the atmosphere so fun. Sometimes they also offer tutorial links from Youtube, then there are also practice sessions working through the g-form. ... interested in activities such as quizzes such as games on telegram so that there are friends to chat with, and learn and teach each other.* ' (FGD3\_P10)

The seventh method is that most of the outstanding students stated that the face-to-face learning method was more effective for them compared to the online learning method. Especially for laboratory and clinical learning materials, the online method is not very effective. With the direct face-to-face learning method, students feel better interactions can be established between lecturers and students so that if there are things that are not clear, students can directly discuss them with their lecturers. Participants also stated that online learning requires large costs because it has to provide quotas, many are also constrained by the network system which is sometimes inadequate so that the learning process becomes less effective. Such statements were expressed by participants in the FGD as follows:

*'... study full time at home, we still have to buy our own quota, then when we practice, it turns out that a lot of them are at home, making videos at home, then we also buy the tools ourselves... I feel like I've paid the tuition fees but I don't use them because I have to buy everything like at home.* ' (FGD1\_P1)

*'... face-to-face learning because it is easier to understand, more focused, can discuss, interact with lecturers and friends more easily.'* (FGD3\_P5)

#### **Fourth theme: time management of outstanding students**

The study timings of these outstanding students are very diverse, most of them reveal that they start studying when the environment is very quiet, usually in the middle of the night or in the early morning. This is as expressed by participants in the FGD as follows:

*'The habit of studying at night, so late at night until 12 pm o'clock that I just went to bed early in the morning I just reviewed maybe to remember ... To be more effective early in the morning'* (FGD1\_P4)

Some of the participants in the FGD also revealed that they had time flexibility in studying, they also revealed that learning would be more effective when

the mood had been obtained. This is conveyed as follows:

*'The time is flexible if for example after the lecture is over, I will review again starting at 2 am or 3 am in the morning getting up to study again'* (FGD3-P8)

To create an effective learning atmosphere, outstanding students also carry out activities that can build a mood for learning. Activities carried out such as sleeping first so that when they wake up, they can be fresh and ready to study, listen to music, watch television, or play first with the time restrictions they have set themselves. This was expressed by several students in the FGD as follows:

*'... I have to listen to music, ma'am, otherwise my mind will wander, so the music makes me focus...'* (FGD2\_P6)

*'My trick is to entertain myself first to build the mood and then learn...'* (FGD3\_P10)

Apart from studying, the outstanding students also divide their time to involve themselves in other activities, such as participating in art groups in their villages, participating in church organizations, participating in seminars, and participating in competitions. The following is the presentation of the participants in the FGD as follows:

*'I once tried to take part in a competition with the same theme as the one I was studying...'* (FGD2-P6)

*'In the arts, it is a refreshing feeling to join the church choir and the church community. When you meet friends on campus, it's a relief.'* (FGD3\_P9)

#### **Fifth theme: motivator for outstanding students**

To be able to achieve learning achievement, the participants stated that the support system they received a strong support system from their parents, family, and also their close colleagues. This was expressed by most of the participants including the following:

*'...the motivation is also because of the parents. Parents and have spent a lot of money.'* (FGD1\_P4)

*'... my parents have done their best so that I can study here, I am an overseas child, and the result of leaving the city of birth to the city of education is that I am capable and able'* (FDG3\_P2)

Apart from parents, participants also revealed that the strongest motivator for achievement is oneself. Many participants stated that they did not want to lose to their friends who were successful in studying outside. They had a sense of competition not to want to lose with their friends. They do not want to be underestimated and feel challenged to be able to show their achievements to others, especially to be able to make their parents proud.

this was expressed by the participants in the FGD as follows:

*'... I still have motivation if I don't study, I don't achieve like that, then I will be the same as other friends, so I don't have a plus if I want to apply for a job.'* (FGD1\_P3)

Another motivator that encouraged participants to learn more was that most of them in the FGD said they wanted to finish their lectures immediately, not repeat or remedial and immediately be able to work on practicing what they learned during lectures. These are described as follows:

*'... hurry up, don't want to be remedial because if you do remedial, you're wasting your time, then you try again, you want to graduate quickly, get to work fast'* (FGD2\_P5).

## DISCUSSION

Students are individuals who study at tertiary institutions, whether at universities, institutes, polytechnics, or academies. They are administratively registered at the college and must follow the requirements and rules that apply to the college. (6). Judging from the age group that students are in the group of late adolescences or young adults, which are between the ages of 18-25 years, they reach a period of establishing a life establishment (7). In line with the research conducted, participants in this study stated that at that age students were able to express their views about their choice to pursue the field of Health, especially in the fields of nursing and nutrition.

In line with the research conducted, participants in this study were the age of students ranged from 21-25 years old, at this age the individual has been able to express his views about his choice to pursue the field of Health, especially in the fields of nursing and nutrition.

Learning achievement for students is the result of the efforts they have made during the learning process. This is in accordance with what was explained by Waidi, 2019 (8) that learning achievement is the maximum result that can be achieved by someone after making a learning effort. Each achievement requires efforts to be achieved by students.

This feeling of pride is certainly something natural for students who have achieved achievements as expected or even exceeded their targets. Self-esteem for the achievements obtained has an important meaning for each individual. This is in accordance with the theory of fulfillment of needs according to Maslow, that everyone has a need to be respected and appreciated.

To be able to achieve this, of course, students are

expected to be able to adapt Learning Methods (C1), Study Time (C2), Understanding Material (C3), Giving Assignments (C4), and Environment (C5). The results of the learning achievements stated that the Comprehension of Material attribute (C3) was the attribute that most influenced the decline in student learning achievement (9). This understanding is understood by outstanding students, that to achieve achievement requires effort, namely learning.

Each individual learner has their own learning goals that may differ from one individual to another. The purpose of learning globally is the occurrence of changes in a person for the better. Changes that are meant to include changes in behavior, and habits from bad to better. Learning also changes attitudes from negative to positive. One thing that cannot be left behind is learning to change skills. Learning also aims to increase knowledge in various fields of science (10).

The learning objectives are in accordance with the learning objectives of outstanding students in Health Education (10). Students work hard in the learning process to achieve the goals they set individually, and vary from one another. According to Sadirman (2012), the purpose of learning is to acquire knowledge, instill concepts and skills, and form attitudes (11). These objectives are in accordance with what was described by the participants in the study. They consciously carry out learning activities to increase their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to prepare for their future.

Students who have achievements are able to find their own effective learning styles that suit each individual. The learning styles of students vary according to their respective competencies. Knowing and understanding each individual's learning style, it can be used as material to understand how the learning process can be well received. Teachers can adjust the delivery of material that is correlated with the learning style of students so that it can be effective in the learning process so that students are able to receive learning quickly, easily, and successfully absorb information or learning (12).

One of the factors that influence learning achievement is learning style. Visual, auditory, read/write and kinesthetic learning styles focus on the sensory modalities of students in responding to any subject matter according to their choice. Learners will learn well if students use and optimize the tendency of these modalities (13).

Challenges in the blended learning process include how students and lecturers adapt interesting learning methods to become effective for students. Elements of blended learning include online and face-to-face

domains. The elements needed include face-to-face in class, independent study, use of applications (web), tutorials, collaboration, and evaluation. Thus, learners can learn in an ideal atmosphere (14)

Every student has his own way of learning. They are looking for the ideal way according to their own way. They each find an effective way of learning according to their own style. The effective way of learning is to set study time, choose a place to study, use learning facilities and infrastructure, make material reviews, hold discussions, and draw conclusions (15).

Time management is a challenge for students. Good time management can be related to the ability of students to manage their time so that it can be used properly and proportionally between studying, participating in organizations, and other activities, and even for refreshing. A balanced timing can encourage students to acquire skills other than academics.

According to the FGD results, outstanding students can manage their time in a balanced way by prioritizing learning. However, students can also take the time to be involved in various organizations. Personally, each individual in the campus organization must also have psychological capital, where the individual's psychological capacity is positive with the characteristics of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (16).

Training themselves to be involved in organizations, indirectly encourages students to be able to manage their time well by being actively involved in organizational activities, showing an individual has individual innovation capability. With high individual innovation capability, it will be able to help overcome problems in completing their tasks, so that the quality and quantity of work can be better. In addition, it also helps generate initiatives to produce more effective and efficient work methods for the organization (17).

Time management is a separate obstacle for students to be able to study consistently, especially in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic. Students need to adapt well because students still think that learning takes place on campus. Thus many students use their time for other things besides studying, such as working or helping their parents (18).

Motivation is the dominant factor for a person to be able to complete his task well and the main task of students is to learn. Participants explained that the factors that encourage students to learn according to the results of the FGD are internal factors from students. This is in accordance with the research of Ria & Suryani (2017), that there is a significant

relationship between ideals and student learning motivation (19).

Good learning motivation of students can affect student achievement. Learning achievement can be influenced by both internal and internal factors. Internal factors include physiological, psychological, five senses, intelligence, talent, and motivation factors (20). While the external factors that affect one's learning success are environmental factors, instrumental factors (21).

In the era of the covid 19 pandemic, learning to use the blended learning method is an alternative that students can run. This is because during the pandemic there were certain restrictions that reduced face-to-face learning on campus. For health students, this is a challenge in itself because the learning methods for health students in developing skills are very limited. For nursing students, guidance can be done in tutorials and online through a blended learning program. Thus, tutoring through blended learning can be used as an alternative to nursing competency guidance for nursing students (22).

## CONCLUSION

Learning achievement is something to be proud of for students. Each outstanding student puts more effort into studying such as going to bed late and getting up early to study, setting a tighter time for studying, practicing repeating learning techniques, summarizing, taking notes, rereading, reviewing, conducting group discussions, and even having self-conversations or in front of friends to try to re-explain what was learned. Besides that, it also requires infrastructure in the form of a strong internet network and adequate operators. In achieving their achievements, students develop a strong self-motivation in learning, so that they can immediately complete their studies. Besides that, learning motivation also comes from other people because of their competitive attitude, and the support from parents and those closest to them. Academic achievement is not a goal for students in learning, but academic achievement is a gift they get for doing hard work, namely studying.

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