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THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING MENTAL HEALTH IN FACING COVID-19

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Abstract

This study intends to explore the influence of psychological problems resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic on someone's life through graphic memoirs. It is shown by literature students that respond to Covid-19 and make the literary work as their critics and reflections. The mental health problem is conveyed explicitly in this study and it has been portrayed through plot, setting, and characters in the author's work. By using the writing techniques from Judith Barrington (1997) on *Writing the Memoir: From Truth to Art*, the researcher attempts to make a copyrighted graphic memoir with the title of *A Light on My Horrible Night*. This graphic memoir reflects on the mental distress that the author felt and experienced during the pandemic. It describes the situation that causes social issues to mental health problems. Through the literary work, the author wants to show that writing can treat mental illness in a simple way known as Writing Therapy. In the graphic memoir, the author also alludes to people who are unable to respond to Covid-19 properly which means they have to experience mental illness in daily life.

Keywords: Covid-19, graphic memoir, human fear, mental health, writing therapy

Introduction

The world is being threatened by the presence of a new deadly virus known as Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19). Since this virus spread throughout the world, many unforeseen problems have entered human life that change our lifestyle, mindset, and habits as we have to adapt to the "new normal". People's thought process, behaviour, and emotional response to an outbreak vary greatly according to their own backgrounds and the community that they live in (Kaligis, T. Indraswari, & I. Ismail, 2020). The drastic change in the surrounding environment due to Covid-19 has made things complicated and terrible. Most of the population have had the experience of losing their loved ones, losing their jobs, and the rest have to do several important things at home (joining virtual classes, attending meetings, and working from home) to avoid the spread of the virus.

In this precarious condition, humans mostly think about how to prevent their bodies from Covid-19, without realizing that their mental health has been disturbed

first as a result of the pandemic. As the pandemic wears on, ongoing and necessary public health measures expose many people to experiencing situations linked to poor mental health outcomes, such as isolation and job loss (Panchal, Kamal, Cox, & Garfield, 2021). The result of the problems is that many people experience mental illness, such as stress, depression, anxiety, paranoia and so on. Just seeing how many fatalities this virus has caused problems for us because we will feel anxious about death (thanatophobia). In addition, people will also feel afraid of being isolated if they have to do quarantine because their bodies have Covid-19 (autophobia). This has proven that the Covid-19 outbreak has had a bad impact on people's mental health, not just their physical health.

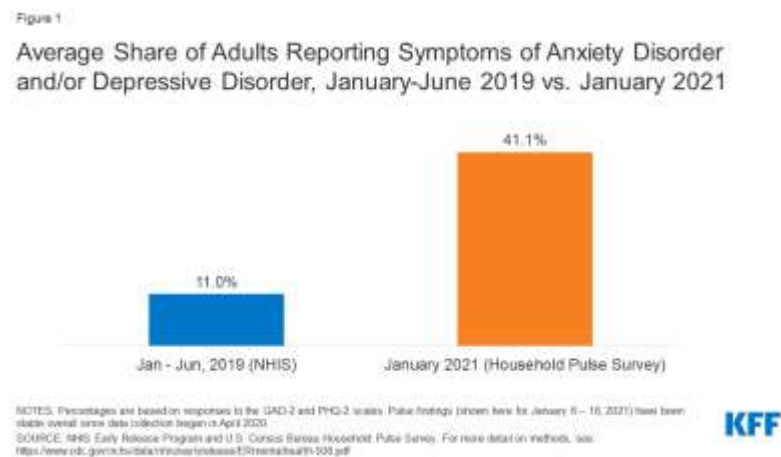


Figure 1. Average Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety Disorder and/or Depressive Disorder, January-June 2019 vs. January 2021

Based on the report from Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), it has found that there is a difference in the percentage of adults who reported anxiety disorders and depressive disorders in 2019 and 2021, which the numbers' friction proves that the percentage of mental illness has increased dramatically since the emergence of Covid-19. It shows that this pandemic is worsening one's mental health, especially adults. People can easily implement health protocols to protect their bodies, but it is very difficult for them to take care of their mental health. In addition to implementing health protocols, reducing the negative effects of Covid-19 on our physical health is vaccination. For example, in Indonesia, we received 1,113,600 doses of COVID-19 vaccines from the COVAX Facility, the international partnership established to ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines around the world (World Health Organization, 2021). The dose of the vaccine will continue to arrive until May 2021 which will succeed in eliminating Covid-19 slowly. The following are statistical data from Our World in Data and JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data to prove it:



Figure 2. Map of Vaccinations in Indonesia | Figure 3. Daily Changes in Covid-19 Statistics in Indonesia

Based on Figure 3, we can find that the effect of vaccination is able to reduce the number of deaths due to Covid-19 in Indonesia. “We should be grateful that Indonesia is one of the countries that can make decisions quickly to get vaccines from various countries in the world,” said Jokowi (Kompas, 2021). According to Jokowi’s statement, we should realize that we do not have to worry again about our physical health because of the vaccination, but we need to pay more attention to our mental health. Extensive research in disaster mental health has established that emotional distress is ubiquitous in affected populations — a finding certain to be echoed in populations affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (Pfefferbaum & S. North, 2020). The possibility that happened is that the emotional distress will worsen the Covid-19 disease that the populations suffer. Poor physical health can lead to an increased risk of developing mental health problems. Similarly, poor mental health can negatively impact physical health, leading to an increased risk of some conditions (Mental Health Foundation, 2016). Although physical and mental health are connected to each other, what we must prioritize in this pandemic era is mental health because our bodies have been protected by vaccines and health protocols to avoid the virus. Indeed, the pandemic will disappear at the end, but humans still cannot escape from their surplus thoughts and feelings caused by Covid-19’s trauma and it cannot be handled properly if it is not done by the appropriate method. So, what is an easy way that everyone can do to maintain their mental health? What methods can they independently apply in reducing mental distress?

Writing as a method in psychological treatments

Reaching out about mental health is no longer a new thing to discuss, especially in the field of psychology. For a long time, psychologists have discussed this problem and sought answers to the implications of mental health problems. In curing mental health problems, doing therapy is the most appropriate solution to apply. There are two ways this can be done: talking therapy and writing therapy, but most of what is used in psychology is talking therapy, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapies (CBT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), psychodynamic therapies, humanistic therapies, counselling, and talking treatments. Talking therapies can help you work out how to deal with negative thoughts and feelings and make positive changes (Mental Health Foundation, 2021). However, it

is true that talking therapy is very helpful in healing mental illness, but what is important to know is that not everyone is able to express what they feel through their speech tools. In fact, people will be more honest in expressing what they feel through writing than speaking. That is the importance of knowing that writing therapy or commonly known as Expressive Writing is also able to cure mental distress, especially for patients who are uncomfortable doing oral psychological therapy. Writing about thoughts and feelings that arise from a traumatic or stressful life experience — called expressive writing — may help some people cope with the emotional fallout of such events (Harvard Medical School, 2020). Expressive writing provides a secure way of purging one's emotional experience without any risk of a negative impact from the other's inappropriate response. It leads to higher emotional awareness and fosters better regulation of emotion and coping with distress (Hussain, 2010).

In the field of literature itself, expressive writing is often considered to be any type of writing that uses literary artistic value—usually referred to as creative writing. Therefore, when we write creatively, it doesn't matter whether we are writing fiction or nonfiction. What matters is that we are sharing experiences and emotions with the reader and, for a while at least, leading them towards a particular point of view (ACS Distance Education, 2021). Through this research, the author attempts to prove that there is a literary work that can help people in dealing with mental illness, such as memoirs. The basis of the memoir-making technique is indeed seen as expressive writing rather than creative writing, but since memoirs are a form of literary work so that they are also made using literary artistic value to attract readers who see them in publication. Although memoirs contain that artistic value, the purpose of making memories will remain the same: to express thoughts and feelings that bother the peace of one's life. Memoirs have been disgorged by virtually everyone who has ever had cancer, been anorexic, battled depression, lost weight (Kephart, 2013). This is the evidence that the memoir can help someone to mitigate the side effects of various diseases, even if it is possible to cure Covid-19. There is a very strong correlation between literature and psychology for the fact that both of them deal with human beings and their reactions, perceptions of the world, miseries, wishes, desires, fears, conflicts and reconciliations; individual and social concerns, by means of varied concepts, methods, and approaches (Aras, 2015). Literature helps psychology by creating healing methods: expressive writing or writing therapy, whilst psychology helps literature in creating works that are caused by psychological problems, such as memoirs, poetry, songs, novels, and so on.

Making memoirs is a form of writing therapy

Memoir is a form of expressive writing or therapeutic writing that functions as a forum to reveal the truths they experience, which may not be conveyed through verbal communication. Research has confirmed that writing about emotionally charged memories is good for the health of the writer—and not just her psyche (DaPra, 2013). Writing a memoir means we get rid of what is bothering our mind and mind, as the author of this study suggests. The author applies a memoir as therapeutic writing to relieve the stress that grows in her mind and creates a work entitled *A Light on My Horrible Night* which will soon be published. This research is based on Louis A. Renza's theory of autobiography in his journal article entitled *The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography* and Mieke Bal's theory

of narratology in his book entitled *Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. These two theories are helpful for the author in making a graphic memoir as she analyses that the memoir is the result of theoretical approaches from autobiography and narratology. Narratology is the theory of narrative text. A theory is a systematic set of generalized statements about a particular segment of reality (Bal, 1985). Autobiography is a basically factual narrative of a person's life written by himself (Renza, 1977). In addition, the author is also inspired by the book *Writing the Memoir: From Truth to Art* by Judith Barrington (1997). In her book, Barrington reflects on the memoir as a place to tell a reality that no one else has ever known and it serves as a person's healing of their inner stress. She also explains that writing a memoir should be done by using imagery, sensory details, and narrative techniques.

A few journals discuss memoirs and writing therapy with varying research topics and objectives. For example, *An Illness of One's Own: Memoir as Art Form and Research as Witness* by Arthur W. Frank (2017) which discusses memoirs as a tool to help cure someone's physical disease in expressing his suffering during recovery. "So, having a lot more to say, I did what I do, which is to write. Had I been a painter or sculptor, a musician, or a dramatist, I would have said what I had to say in that idiom," (Frank, 2017). There is a difference from this research which the author discusses about mental health, not physical health. In addition, a knowledge gap can also be seen in the journal *Expressive and Creative Writing in the Therapeutic Context: From the Different Concepts to the Development of Writing Therapy Programs* by Ana Catarina Costa and Manuel Viegas Abreu. The journal discusses the difference between using expressive and creative writing in the context of writing therapy for mental health problems and the object of the research is poetry, not memoir which is discussed in this research. Catarina and Viegas also prove that creative writing is less effective as writing therapy rather than expressive writing. "We did not find studies that define and conceptualize creative writing as a particular therapy or creative writing programs in clinical settings," (Catarina C. & Viegas A., 2018). That is the rationale for this study to prove that expressive and creative writing can work together in hand through memoirs. In the form of graphics, a memoir can be categorized as "creative expressive writing" because it narrates our thoughts and feelings in expressing our diverse problems, which are usually private and sensitive to be expressed, but still retain the value of literary art.

Method

We have briefly known about the role of memoirs as a literary work in dealing with psychological problems that attack a person's mental impact as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The topic discussed here is modern—no previous research has done this—specifically about how the Covid-19 pandemic damages people's mental health and how literary works become a tool of psychological method as writing therapy. It will produce a new discovery that has never been discussed by any existing study. No one has ever discussed how memoirs can help cure a people's mental illness. Although this issue is widely discussed in psychology, this research proves that literature can offer an influence to the case of mental illness in today's world. However, the graphic memoir created by the author, of course, will be historically important to literature as a reflection of writing

therapy in psychological methods. The following is an explanation of the process of making a graphic memoir as the main source of this research.

1.Pre-Writing

1.1 Musing

The most important step in writing a memoir is to muse on something that has happened in our lives. The events may be things that will never be forgotten, whether it is painful or pleasant. In this context, the writer pondered what is a burden in her thoughts and feelings. The impacts of Covid-19 greatly exacerbate the situation in her life and suppress all the hopes she has expected in the long run. Then, the author decided to write a memoir and try to use her memory to remember what she experienced while adjusting to her new life during the pandemic. It is undeniable that when we reflect on our problems, our minds will blacken and there is nothing positive. Then, the writer tries to focus on her mind to stay on the most important point of occurrence. The event she got to pour into her memoir is when she really felt that she was so distressed by the circumstances during the pandemic, even though she almost became depressed due to her fear of death and isolation.

1.2 Brainstorming

After finding one incident that will be written in the memoir, the next step is to arrange the important points that will be the basis of the writing. By finding the object of the problem, the author automatically finds out the genre and theme that she will use. The author chooses the darkest side of the Covid-19 pandemic as the pathetic event that she least wanted to experience in her life. She has experienced depression, thanatophobia, autophobia, and panic attacks for five months during the new normal. The author thinks that mental distress will be good to discuss. Then, she observes that most people around her do not care about their mental health. They only think about how to avoid the deadly virus without knowing that their mental health has been impaired first. We cannot control our dark thoughts and feelings that impact our mental health. That is the author's main purpose in composing her memoir. She does not want other people to be caught in the same poison circle as her, but she wants others to learn from her experiences.

1.3 Finding References

In this section, the researcher tries to find out the proper technique for making memoirs. Previously, she thought that a memoir was the same as a diary because they were both expressive writing — where we expressed our deep feeling and thought into a piece of writing. After seeing the book “Writing the Memoir” by Judith Barrington (1997), the author found that writing a memoir is different from writing a diary. Memoirs have a complex structure and technique that is not shared by diaries, which is using figurative languages to depict the situation. Barrington explained that writing a memoir should be done by using imagery, concrete details, and sensory details and narrative techniques such as, using an eye-catching opening, arousing the readers' emotions, pacing, setting, and storyline (Barrington, 1997). However, a memoir may look more like a fabricated story, but it is nevertheless based on a fact that fits the life story of the author. It is just that the memoir uses imagery to make it look even more interesting.

2. Writing Process

2.1 Writing the Memoir

The author has understood Barrington's (1997) memoir techniques and already has a bullet point outline that will assist her in writing the memoir. Due to the memoir's narrative elements, the writer must determine: plot, settings, character, and point of view. The plot diagram used by the author is a flashback plot because there is a part showing the author's past. Then, she determines exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution so that the memoir becomes more structured and more chronological. After making the plot diagram, the writer determines the settings: at night with a tense atmosphere and in the train station. Then, the author chooses the right character to describe herself as the spot of the story. The depiction of her character can be seen from how she interacts with other people and how she views the problems during pandemic. Discussing the problem of the character is indeed related to the point of view because the author uses the first point of view which depicts her dark thoughts at the moment. From the thoughts conveyed through the memoir, readers can really feel what the writer is going through.

After making the narrative elements, the writer determines what kind of imagery she will use in the memoir. She believes that imagery is very important in making memoirs because it will help the readers to imagine what the author experienced by using figurative languages. The imagery she uses to strengthen her implicative language is auditory, visual, and tactile. For example, she uses auditory imagery in the sentence "The noise of the train made me realize this strange reality again", using visual imagery in the sentence "I just realized that the sky had turned dark, creepy like a thriller movie I used to watch", and using tactile imagery in the sentence "Suddenly, my chest tightened remembering her, how useless I was as her friend who couldn't make time for her when she was alive." The author believes that these three images she uses are sufficient to describe how the character is doing during experiencing the human fears.

3. Graphic Making

3.1 Finding References

Creating graphic literary works is the most difficult thing to do. The writer has no experience in making literary works on a graphic basis. Initially, she was only advised by her English literature lecturer to develop her memoir into a graphic memoir to make it look more eye-catching. The realm of wordless books opens countless opportunities for expression and meaning potential (Boatright, 2010). One question arose in the author's mind: "how to make this writing into a graphic? I'm not good at drawing." Then, the author was looking for sources about graphic memoir and what she got were only the information of graphic novels. She started with looking for how to make graphic novels first (because this was the most popular literary work of graphic besides comics and she thought the technique used will be the same), then she found a site that helped her make a graphic memoir.

According to the Master Class article, a graphic novel has characteristics: a clear beginning, middle, end, a central narrative supplemented by optional stories, character development and personal journeys, thematic messaging, and precise, carefully considered dialogue and narration (Gaiman, 2020). By reading this article, the writer begins to understand what graphic novels are, but one thing still confuses her: "what is the difference between graphic novels and comics?" After she searches

again, there are several things that distinguish them. Graphic novels explain more of their images through narration than conversation bubbles, unlike comics. The thickness of a graphic novel is thicker than a comic. Then, the author started to find a way to make the graphic memoir without having to draw them.

3.2 Redrafting into Storyboard

The first thing to do in creating a graphic memoir is to sketch the most important parts of the memoir that have been previously made. The author does not use an application to describe this sketch, only uses plain paper and then draws several panels to separate events from one another. In order to create a storyboard, it is not really necessary to be too clear about the representation of the events you want to portray. In this case, the most important thing is the big pictures of the memoir and the narrative that explains each of those pictures. The purpose of making a storyboard is to make it easier for the writer to create the narrative graphic later.

3.3 Creating the Graphic Memoir

After completing the storyboard, the writer begins to create the graphic memoir based on the previously made sketches. She does not make the graphs by drawing, but she has another way of making them. The author was inspired by the words of her close friend, “the graphics must look similar to humans in real life.” She immediately gets the idea to make the graphs and it is not using applications, such as Pixton.com which can create comics or graphic novels automatically. The reason is the graphics produced are more like cartoons. She thought that portraying herself as an original character would appear more real. However, it is impossible if a graphic memoir is depicted with a real picture of a human. Then, the writer chooses the next method—by editing the captured photos and using a comic-like filter in the application named Picsart.com. There are a lot of filters used, but her lecturer recommends using the colourful version. After imagining the concept of making the graphic memoir, the writer came to the real scenes to take a photo shoot of herself and surroundings so that she could edit it later to look like a comic image.

4. Post-Making Memoir

4.1 Final Editing

As previously discussed, the last thing the writer does after getting representation of the sketches is editing the pictures using filters to give a comic-like effect. The filters used are coloured, not black and white to give the real effect of the representation. Then, the edited images are inserted into the graphic novel panel using an application called Comica.com. The pictures are arranged according to the sketch that has been made, then they are given narrative explanation and conversation dialogue. After arranging the pictures into panels, then she changes the format of the panels into pdf to ensure that each panel page is unified and arranged according to the storyboard.

4.2 Submission

The graphic memoir that has been made is then submitted to the author’s lecturer. The lecturer gives feedback on the author’s graphic memoir and says that this could be the research to show that literature can help in reducing mental stress suffered

by a person with a psychological treatment method called writing therapy or expressive writing in literature.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the author's graphic memoir, we realize how a person can relieve his or her mental distress just by writing a memoir. The writer expresses her inner stress through a short paragraph which she writes according to the memory she has. This is a part of her reflection as life lessons during the pandemic and the impact of writing a memoir has a profound effect on her life. The author feels better and relieved because the burden of her thoughts and fears is conveyed in her memoir. The following is the memoir created by the author as a response to Covid-19:

A Light on My Horrible Night

"Wow, the new year is coming. It will be the best year ever!" On the train that was moving, I returned to the past, where everything still felt like a dream filled with hope. The noise of the train made me realize this strange reality again. I just realized that the sky had turned dark, creepy like a thriller movie I used to watch. I had to feel tired again after doing a routine that feels different than usual. People are seen wearing their masks and clothes completely closed, also there is a gap between them; efforts to save themselves from the chain of the spread of the virus. No more smiles, no more laughter; like a zombie without hope. Many unexpected events have happened lately; Of course, it wasn't a surprise at a birthday party, it was about death. I know definitely that death is a mystery under the universe where no one can predict, but what if death would be a truly terrible thing? As it happened to you. It reminded me that several times ago, there were many reports of people leaving the world, even I had to experience this sadness for real when I had to lose my old friend due to pneumonia and severe ulcers. Suddenly, my chest tightened remembering her, how useless I was as her friend who couldn't make time for her when she was alive. I didn't even come to her funeral because I had to avoid the crowd, my mother forbade me. I felt sorry, but what could I do again? I just became more and more afraid of death; I was afraid to be abandoned or leaving first; I also didn't know how life in another world. Suddenly, I remembered my mother's words, *"God will always beside you as long as you want to believe in Him."* As if getting light on a terrible night, I smiled under my mask and brought home the future that was starting clear again.

Figure 4. 'A Light on My Horrible Night' Memoir

This memoir describes the situation at that time—when everyone felt worried about the arrival of Covid-19 because the vaccine had not been given and the death rate was increasing in 2020. The author expressed her deep sadness and dark thoughts which raged over the painful experiences she had during the pandemic. The author realized that the world had changed so drastically where there was no more happiness that she could feel as if it was just a nightmare on a horrible night. With the arising of problems that came alternately, it disturbed her mental health. As a result, the author had experienced thanatophobia and autophobia until mid-2020 and the phobias disappeared when she heard the news that vaccinations had been found. Then, the author made a memoir to remind her of the bad moments, wrote it down while reflecting on the precious value she could receive, and showing it to everyone. Not only that, the author then developed it into a new form of literary work: "Graphic Memoir" as a combined form of memoirs and graphic novels—memoirs which are re-illustrated into graphic form in order to create artistic art from a form of creative writing. Even though the memoir looks like fiction, the realism elements contained in it remain the basis of its creation. Memoir is really a kind of

hybrid form with elements of both fiction and essay, in which the author's voice, musing conversationally on a true story, is all important (Barrington, 1997).

Applying memoir writing into graphics

Some people may think that making illustrations with graphics is very difficult and complicated. In fact, making literary works in graphic form is very useful and even profitable. For example, we make memoirs about the Covid-19 pandemic which the main goal is to lighten the burden on our minds and reduce our mental stress, but making a memoir in graphic form will be more interesting and unique because we can develop our creativity as well and show it to everyone in the public. Although indeed we can post it in written form, making graphic illustrations will be much more effective to attract people's attention to see our work. In order to be effective, an illustration should convey an idea in a very clear and simple way. Any piece of writing can be enhanced by drawings and images, whether you want to tell a story or teach a lesson (Ahava Group, 2019).



Figure 5. Samples of Graphic Memoir "A Light on My Horrible Night"

Based on Figure 5 above, the writer tries to represent what she has written in her memoir into a graphic form. By choosing the right image, readers will imagine what is shown on the graphic so that they will get a better understanding of the story rather than just reading a piece of writing. The writer identifies three important aspects that assist her in conveying ideas and messages in her graphic memoir: plot, character, and point of view. To convey how the plot of the story is, the writer arranges the proper words into the narrative and conversation in each panel. It will present the storyline from introduction to resolution so that the readers can grasp the point of the graphic memoir, about the impact of Covid-19 which has bad influences on human life. No less important, characters also build and animate the story plot that has been conveyed through narrative and conversation. Through the expressions shown by the characters, it convinces the readers that the main character is experiencing mental stress during the pandemic. The supporting characters in the story help the main character in shaping the character development from being weak to strong one. Apart from the plot and characters, the point of view in the graphic memoir also greatly influences the story. By choosing the proper angle, it helps each character in bringing the storyline to go according to what the writer meant so that there is no misunderstanding between the reader and the writer. Behind these three important aspects, the color effect also highly supports the creation of this graphic memoir in indicating the theme and genre. The choice of dark color effects symbolizes the bleak side of the story as a representation of the dark thoughts experienced by the author.

However, there are some benefits in graphic literary works like this. We can bring it out to publishers to disseminate our work to the public so that everyone can read and understand what we want to say in response to the problems that are happening. After that, we will get money if our work is accepted. This can also help our family finances who may decline due to the number of companies that have gone bankrupt and employees who have been laid off. If we do not want to publish the graphic memoir, we can post it on social media. The people who read our literary works will like and appreciate it by providing good support through comments. It is certain that almost everyone experiences the same things as us during the pandemic, so they will agree with our critics conveyed through the graphic memoirs. Indirectly, this will give us pleasure so that it can help us in reducing our mental illness because of the support by people around us even though it is done over long distances. The likes, comments and posts we share on social media can often seem inconsequential, but they matter. They tap into some of the very elements that make us human, our addictions, desires, anxieties and joys (Seiter, 2016). Even so, if we are people who prefer privacy, we can save the graphic memoirs to ourselves as a collection and “the real memory” to remind us of the reflections that have been made.

Responses on affected populations: a sample of memoirs’ effectiveness

The accuracy of writing memoirs is not only experienced by the researcher. There were 19 students of English literature at Krida Wacana Christian University who experienced mental stress during the pandemic and made graphic memoirs as their method of therapy in reducing the stress. Each participant was given the same 5 questions about the effectiveness of writing memoirs as a therapeutic method for healing mental illness during the Covid-19 pandemic. The basic purpose of this

interview is to strengthen the researcher’s argument that memoirs can indeed be used as a therapeutic method for healing mental illnesses, especially during the pandemic. Students exposed to more opportunities to engage with expressive writing are also flexing their inquiry muscles, questioning ideas within their discipline, etc (King, 2014). The following are the results of the interview which was conducted on 12-13 April 2021 through a questionnaire.

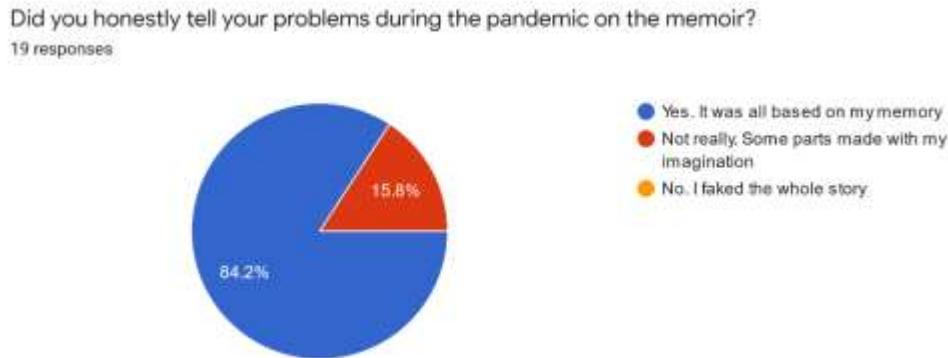


Figure 6. Question 1 of Memoir-Making Questionnaire “The Effectiveness of Memoirs as a Writing Therapy in Psychological Treatment Methods”

The first question “Did you honestly tell your problems during the pandemic in the memoir?” was made aiming to find the honesty of the 19 participants who wrote their memoirs in expressing their burden on their minds. 84.2% of them made it up to their real memory, 15.8% of them admitted to meddle their memory with imagination in writing memoirs, and none of them actually faked the contents. This finding proves that samples of the affected populations share their life problems through memoirs and almost all of the participants tell them in a real term.

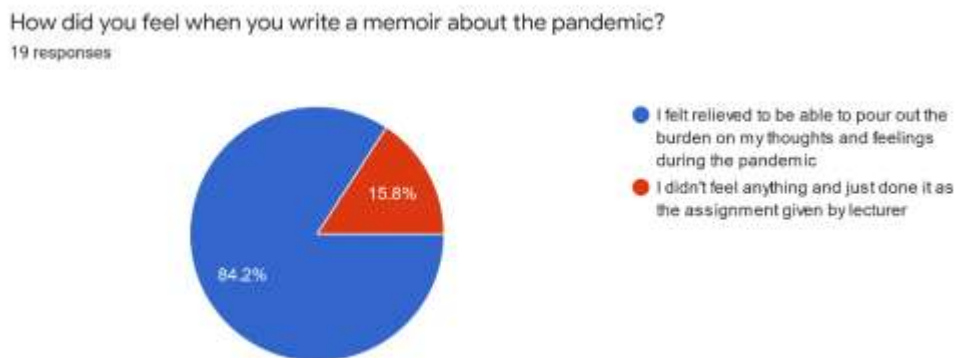


Figure 7. Question 2 of Memoir-Making Questionnaire “The Effectiveness of Memoirs as a Writing Therapy in Psychological Treatment Methods”

The second question “How did you feel when you wrote a memoir about the pandemic?” tests the correctness of the memoir as a tool for relieving the burden on their thoughts and even reducing their mental stress. 84.2% of them felt relieved when they poured their problems in life during the pandemic into the memoirs, but 15.8% of them did not feel that the memoir was able to relieve their mental stress.

However, this is enough to prove that memoirs are able to work perfectly as therapeutic writing and assist psychology in healing methods for several mental illnesses caused by Covid-19.

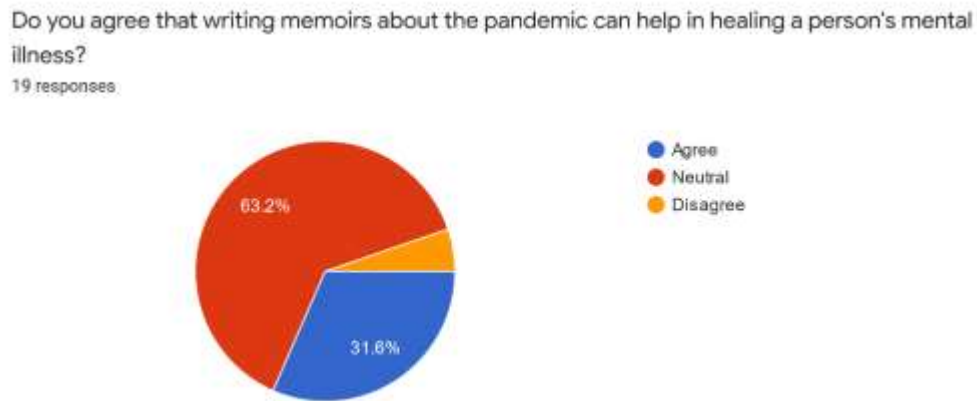


Figure 8. Question 3 of Memoir-Making Questionnaire “The Effectiveness of Memoirs as a Writing Therapy in Psychological Treatment Methods”

The third question “Do you agree that writing memoirs about the pandemic can help in healing a person’s mental illness?” proves whether the 19 participants felt that the memoirs were able to cure a person’s mental illness or not. Only 31.6% of them agreed with the statement and 5.3% of them disagreed. The rest, 63.2% of them did not choose both options. This shows that a half of them are not really sure if the memoirs can actually help in curing a person’s mental illness. That is caused by the lack of research that discusses memoirs as a tool for therapy writing methods. Even so, a quarter of them feel confident and agree that memoirs can cure mental illness during a pandemic as what they experienced when writing the memoirs.

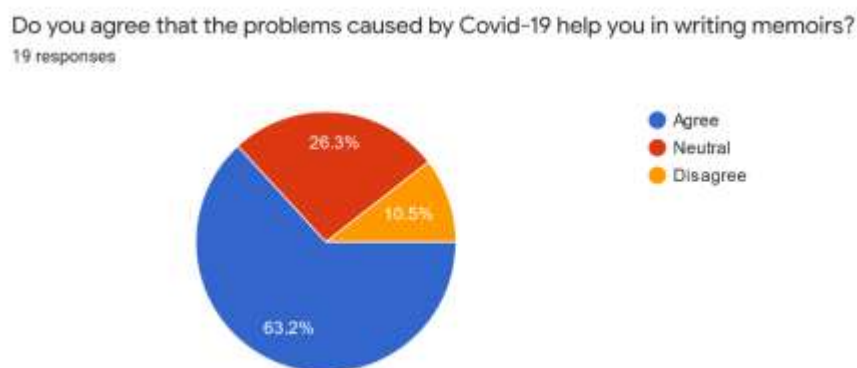


Figure 9. Question 4 of Memoir-Making Questionnaire “The Effectiveness of Memoirs as a Writing Therapy in Psychological Treatment Methods”

The fourth question “Do you agree that the problems caused by Covid-19 help you in writing memoirs?” aims to ensure that the Covid-19 pandemic is part of their toughest problems in life so that it simply allows them to write memoirs because it makes anyone remember the most unforgettable events, whether it is about fun or sadness. That is why Covid-19 made them feel devastated and then poured all their

memories into writing. As in Figure 8 diagram, 63.2% of them agree with the statement and the rest are not very sure or even disagree at all. A third of them do not feel the impact of the problems caused by Covid-19 epidemic on their memoirs, perhaps because they do not have as severe problems as those who believe that Covid-19 has an impact on their writing.

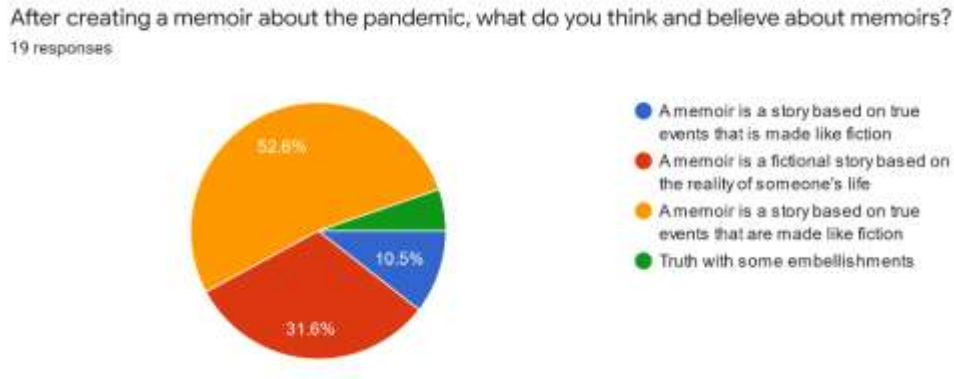


Figure 10. Question 5 of Memoir-Making Questionnaire “The Effectiveness of Memoirs as a Writing Therapy in Psychological Treatment Methods”

The fifth question “After creating a memoir about the pandemic, what do you think and believe about memoirs?” tests the mindset of the 19 participants who had written a memoir about pandemic. 63.1% of them agreed with the statement that a memoir is a story based on real events with a structure similar to fiction. 31.6% of them think that a memoir is actually a fictional story based on someone’s true story. The rest provide a personal opinion where the memoir is truthful but there are a few frills to make it interesting. This finding shows that almost all of them believe that memoirs are indeed true stories taken from reality, even though the writings are similar to fiction due to containing narrative structure: characters, plots, point of views, and conflicts. Those who disagree with this statement are probably those who use imagination other than memory to assist them in writing their memoirs. The fact is, not everyone has a good memory of an incident, so they subconsciously use their imagination in writing their memoirs. This is what should be considered for memoirists because the contents of the memoir should not be deceived. The main basis of writing a memoir is to use our memory, if we use imagination as well, so that it cannot be categorized as writing a memoir. Tampering with the truth will lead you to writing a bit too carefully—which in turn will rob your style of the ease that goes with honesty. Dishonest writing is very often mediocre writing, there is no true psyche of memoir (Barrington, 1997).

Conclusion

Based on the findings written in this study, we know that memoirs can indeed reduce mental stress due to Covid-19 like what the researcher and the 19 participants experienced. Memoirs can be used as a place to express what is bothering our mind and sense. Despite that, the memoirs can also be used as our criticism and response to the Covid-19 outbreak, which has many impacts on human life. Many painful things happen during the pandemic, such as the loss of loved ones, job loss, broken family finances, bankruptcy, and suboptimal education

systems which can damage our mental health. By writing memoirs as therapy writing, we are able to vent our negative emotions and thoughts into writing which will become the history of human life regarding Covid-19. Expressive writing can also be used in psychology as a method of healing mental illness because not everyone can reveal what they really suffer through speech therapy. Without realizing it, improving our mental stress can help accelerate the healing of our physical ailments because the two are intertwined. This is why it is important for people to maintain their mental health, especially in this pandemic era so that we do not sink into the black ocean currents created by an invisible virus.

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