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STUDENTS' NAVIGATION IN FACING DIFFICULTIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

Anecdotal evidence of the impacts of the COVID-19 on college students suggests that the majority of them found the pandemic very devastating. The absence of direct encounters with their colleagues and lecturers and inadequate tools to support online learning were significant reasons why learning during the pandemic era has been a challenge. This study investigates students majoring in the language to reveal how these students dealt with the learning during this context. Researchers gathered more data by an online survey distributed 161 students to measure whether they demonstrate a growth mindset. A series of in-depth interviews are conducted to elaborate on their views. This study is expected to add a layer to the scholarships around learning during the pandemic era, especially among those language students.

Keywords: growth mindset, language learner, pandemic, self-agency, self-esteem transformative learning

Introduction

The research titled "Students' Navigation in Facing Difficulty During the COVID_19 Pandemic" aims to capture the perceptions of language students regarding learning experiences during COVID-19 in the past year. The absence of personal encounters also causes many students to experience difficulties in fulfilling their physical and mental needs, making it difficult for students to achieve adequate levels of learning. The things that cause a terrible impact are misperceptions among students, absence of direct support from peers, diminishing motivation, and unsupported technology tools.

Why is this research necessary? First, the COVID-19 phenomenon has had a significant impact on learning activities. Given that no one is ready and prepared to anticipate this kind of condition, it is considered necessary to obtain data regarding how students respond to the various challenges. Second, the researchers are students and lecturers from the PBI Study Program USD, especially the students

who will work in the teaching field. This condition has undoubtedly brought about various changes and new habits, especially concerning the dynamics of learning. It is valued for the importance of capturing this dynamic, hoping that it will equip us as future educators.

The benefit of this research is that it can be a reference for students, lecturers, and universities to become a milestone for their learning which is expected to be better than before. By knowing the sample point of view, struggles, and situations of Indonesian students, we can learn more about these difficulties and use the best solutions for the front guard in the following learning activity. In addition, this also anticipates the possibilities that will occur in the Post-COVID-19 learning/era.

The difficulties that have been experienced are first because of the very lack of experience in researching. The researchers just participated in this in the fifth semester with library study sources. It also needed much time to understand how to make good and correct research. Therefore, the researchers need time to understand each process that exists with different types of research methods. It is grateful to have a supportive team and a coach to slowly be helped in this research. Second is a means of interviewing in a qualitative method; although it may seem easy, it still has to think about the connection, what is needed to record all the interviews, and ensure the right people and conditions for conducting interviews. Third, how do students generally respond to surveys? In other words, it depends on whether they have a growth mindset or not, which will be helpful to and get success in this research. This fact might cause the contrary result between the survey and the interview and tends to be dishonest.

Based on the research dealing with the rise of the coronavirus globally, many aspects change specific patterns by being more adaptive to the existing situation, which requires that many people comply with health protocols and those related regulations. For that reason, significantly, many educational institutions have changed the way they teach online in Indonesia. Of course, this is very influential on how students respond, habits, and perspectives to every lesson they face. This study investigates the research questions regarding how students navigate themselves in various challenges when lectures must be carried out online and what matters, be it learning or curriculum that students perceive as optimal support for them. This study used qualitative and quantitative research by conducting in-depth interviews with four students from different places and 161 students in questionnaires to understand each region as a sample perspective as a whole.

The subsequent discussion is about areas of literature review that have been discovered. This study has three main theories as a reference in survey questions: growth mindset, self-agency, and transformative learning theory. The growth mindset theory helps this research recognize the types of mindset that exist in respondents. This theory helps measure how respondents navigate the problematic things they face, especially when processing problems in their minds. Types of growth mindset are willingness to take on challenges, willingness to help others grow, love of continuous learning, willingness to work beyond regular time schedules, willingness to learn from thriving, and self-confidence. Finding the growth mindset is the first step that must be investigated to identify the respondents' internal motivation. The second theory is self-agency, in which this theory indicates the ability to analyze problems that occur in the environment, the willingness to be

part of the problems and solutions, and the courage to take solution roles without having to be asked or because they occupy a specific position. This theory is closely related to how the respondent is related to the respondent's sensitivity to problems in their environment, becoming the initiator and provider of solutions in society. This theory is a reference for the next level of growth mindset to know the active involvement of respondents in their environment. The last theory is transformative learning, and this theory refers to a person's maturity in learning, where adult humans learn not to master knowledge merely but value and what is to be implemented in that knowledge. Adult humans also have life experiences that explain how the world operates, they experience authentic experiences in seeing the human perspective, and their experiences will serve as a reflective message for them. Thus, humans learn by opening themselves authentically and ready to negotiate with dynamic realities. This theory explains that adult humans are not trapped and comfortable with the past; they always have solutions to rise from situations and have high adaptability. Researchers hope that it might help them to think clearly in every step taken for change. For instance, ready to listen to others, admit that people are not perfect, and ready to embrace new things.

Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset

Carol Dweck and her colleagues became concerned about students' views toward failure over 30 years ago. They discovered that students rebounded while others seemed to be weakened by even minor setbacks. Dr. Dweck coined the terms fixed mindset and growth mindset to explain the implicit assumptions people have about education and awareness after observing the actions of thousands of children. As students believe they can improve their intelligence, they realize that hard work pays off. As a result, they put in more time and effort, which contributes to tremendous success.

From that research, Dweck (2006) argued that a growth mindset occurs when individuals presume that their most basic abilities can be established by effort and determination, with brains and talent serving only as a starting point. Students with a growth mindset appear to be more focused on learning in the classroom. Their priorities are to grow, to put in the hard work and strategies needed to attain knowledge, and to persevere in the face of hardships. Students who have a growth mindset are more prone to admit mistakes and setbacks and have higher grit than their peers.

On the other hand, Dweck (2006) also argued that the fixed mindset believes that one's capabilities, skills, and intellect are immutable and cannot be modified. Students with a fixed mindset are excessively concerned with their performance. They put effort into appearing intelligent and never foolish, resist initiative because it makes them sound incompetent, and are easily deterred by setbacks.

Is it crucial to have a growth mindset? Yes, indeed. A growth mindset is valuable because this will assist people in overcoming challenges they may encounter while learning new things or acquiring new skills. Persistence and determination are essential in a growth mindset. People will revolutionize the way they learn by improving the way they think. Knowing that their skills and abilities can be cultivated encourages them to expand their perspectives in life, allowing them to learn, discover, and accomplish more.

Now, how does a growth mindset affect one's ability to learn? Mangels et al. (2006) said that when we look inside the brain, we can see that students with a growth mindset are more fascinated with training than doing very well. In one experiment, researchers brought people into the lab. They wore an EEG cap on their heads to measure their brain activity. Scientists asked participants a simple question when testing brain stimulation. Students give their responses, and scientists then tell them whether they were correct or incorrect. In other words, they were provided feedback on their performances. According to the researchers, when participants with a growth mindset and a fixed mindset were told correct or incorrect, all had active brains. As a result, both of the participants paid close attention to the performance evaluations.

What is more surprising is what happened after that. The correct answer was given to the participants. The scientists examined the participants' brain activity once more. People with a growth mindset had considerably more activity in their brains than those with a fixed mindset. People with a fixed mindset tuned out after learning whether they were correct or incorrect; they were unwilling to learn the correct response. The scientists asked the respondents a pop quiz at the end of the study with the same trivia questions. People with a growth mindset, predictably, showed improvement.

Self-Agency

The second theory is self-agency, in which this theory indicates the ability to analyze problems that occur in the environment, the willingness to be part of the problems and solutions, and the courage to take solution roles without having to be asked or because they occupy a specific position. This theory is closely related to how the respondent is related to the respondent's sensitivity to problems in their environment, becoming the initiator and provider of solutions in society. This theory is a reference for the next level of growth mindset to know the active involvement of respondents in their environment.

According to Fatta B. Nahap friends (2010), Self-agency (SA) is the individual's perception that action is the consequence of his/her intention. This means that it is a straightforward thing that he and his friends want to express, that self-agency is how a person is responsible for himself and the surrounding environment then takes reflective steps for a good cause. A person with responsibility will always be able to navigate himself under any circumstances. SA is also related to the growth mindset. When someone has a high growth mindset, then responsibility in him also follows. SA and GM (growth mindset) show a positive correlation.

In addition, Self-agency is not only related to self-responsibility but with the surrounding environment and even extends. Viktor Gecas wrote, "While we are indeed products of social and physical forces, we are also causal agents in the construction of our environments and ourselves," it is apparent that we are part of society and will play a full role wherever we are. Our behavior will affect and deal directly with society, and society will slowly shape our personality. In other words, our attitude that we put out must conform to the rules and responsibilities around our society because we are part of those who influence and are influenced.

Perceived Quality of Teaching

Perceived quality of teaching is essential, especially nowadays in the online learning era. Not all teachers are equipped to teach online, and there were many challenges to teach. The lack of teacher training, technology problems, course content and pedagogy issue, student inexperience, and a failure to provide multiple forms of communication with and between students (Granitz & Greene 2003). Uncovered evidence that online learning increases student-to-student interaction, student-to-instructor interaction, critical thinking, and student satisfaction. (Hay and Colleagues)

The journal of emerald insight stated that perceived quality of teaching is essential, and it consists of curriculum, facilities, contact personnel, social activities, education counselors, assessment, and instruction medium. Those were connected with what the researcher had conducted through the questionnaire. In this aspect, the research was focusing on the facilities (media), social activities (variety of the materials), educational counselors (willingness to understand students' difficulties), and assessment (feedback). Online learning has real potential to provide superior learning (Sherif & Khan 2005). To realize that potential, online educators must adapt teaching methods and infrastructures that take advantage of the unique and "collaborative" capabilities available through Internet-based virtual communities (Hay, Hodgkinson, et al., 2004).

Lecturers must pay attention to the course online as well. Courses online in an online learning environment should be challenging, current, easy to access, relevant to students' needs, and conveyed in an exciting manner (Drago, Peltier, & Sorensen, 2002; Evans, 2001; Jones & Kelley, 2003). Not all students are at the same pace in absorbing the materials. The content should be planned and made available to students at the beginning of the course (Abernathy, 1999). Besides the content, the interaction and relationship between students and lecturers are essential to gain motivation and strength. The motivation itself is adversely affected when students feel overwhelmed by the mental effort (Pintrich & Schunk 2001). Studies suggest that flexibility has a paramount influence on learner's motivation towards online learning. McCall (2002) found that flexibility, convenience, and control (the freedom to work at one's own pace) were the primary factors that influenced their participation and perseverance in online distance courses.

Method

This research is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. It is quantitative research because the researchers provided a Google Form to fill in respondents' assessment of themselves in the range of 1-4 (kurang setuju, cukup setuju, setuju dan sangat setuju) in the context of growth mindset, self-agency, transformative learning, and also open-ended questions about their very own experiences of learning languages during the pandemic of COVID 19. Specifically for the 20 growth mindset questions in the survey, the calculation of the results for the category is divided into 4: for a score of 0-19 is considered as a strong fixed mindset, 20-31 is for fixed mindset with some growth ideas, 32-44 is a growth mindset with some fixed ideas and 45-60 for strong growth mindset.

The respondents of this study are college students who take a language learning majority in Indonesia, from batch 2017-2020. The survey was distributed through WhatsApp groups and personal messages, and it was opened from March

30, 2021, to April 9, 2021. One hundred sixty-one respondents filled the survey. It is also agreeable to say that this research also uses qualitative research because an interview is a form of focused group discussion (FGD) with open-ended questions were conducted for selected respondents/samples for further explanation about their experiences. Four language learners were interviewed in this discussion in the middle of May 2021; two of them were Sanata Dharma University Students. The instruments used in this research were surveys through Google Form and FGD by zoom meeting. There were some steps the researchers did to analyze the data, such as sorting the data using a Google Spreadsheet to present the data in a more manageable way, discussing the survey result, and discussing the FGD result, mainly using zoom meeting, due to the Pandemic situation.

Findings and Discussion

The researchers researched and got the complete data from all the research instruments, including surveys and interviews. To gain the objectives of the research, the researchers had analyzed the data systematically and accurately.

The data were analyzed in order to conclude the objective of the study. Researchers described the findings in this chapter into three parts.

Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset

After dividing the results of the respondents into three groups; Sanata Dharma University (USD), STKIP Pamane Talino (PT), and outside of the two, researchers found surprising facts in this section. Researchers focused on comparing respondents from USD and STKIP PT, each of which there were 52 respondents assessed. According to the processed data shown in figure 1.1 below, the average score of USD students in the context of a growth mindset was 27.65, while the average score of STKIP PT students was 18.31.

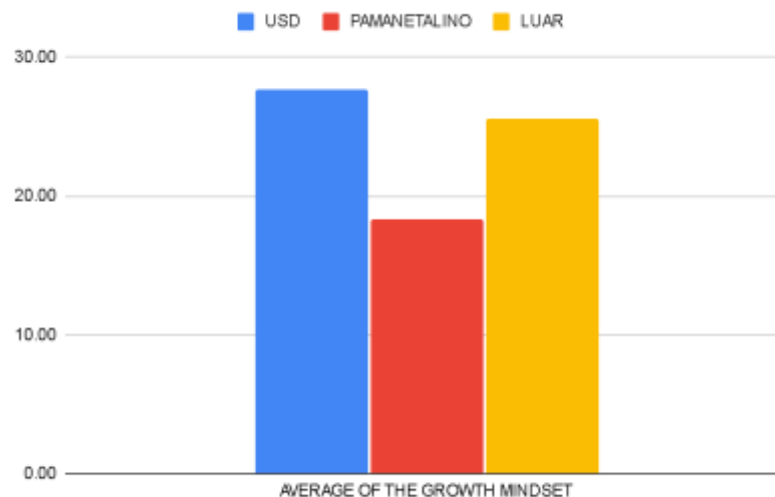


figure 1.1. score comparison of 3 categories

According to the categorization of growth mindset scores described, USD students tend to have a fixed mindset with some growth ideas, while the scores of respondents from PT indicate that they tend to have a strong fixed mindset.

Based on the data obtained above, the researchers conducted further data processing using the ANOVA test to prove the significance of the data. Researchers chose fisheries significance at the 0.01 level. The results of the data shown in *figure 1.2* can conclude that statistically, students from USD and STKIP PT differ significantly in the context of a growth mindset.

Summary of Data						
	Treatments					
	1	2	3	4	5	Total
N	51	52				103
$\sum X$	1410	952				2362
Mean	27.6471	18.3077				22.932
$\sum X^2$	44684	22188				66872
Std.Dev.	10.6786	9.66				11.1613

Result Details				
Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	2245.8003	1	2245.8003	F = 21.68357
Within-treatments	10460.724	101	103.5715	
Total	12706.5243	102		

The F-ratio value is 21.68357. The p-value is < .00001. The result is significant at $p < .01$.

figure 1.2. result of ANOVA test of USD compared to STKIP PT

Although the data shows that students from STKIP PT tend to have a strong fixed mindset, researchers conducted by researchers through FGDs show the opposite results. This condition might be due to one factor or weakness that is very likely to occur in the group interview process, where someone might answer questions dishonestly for specific reasons, such as looking good in front of other respondents.

When students from STKIP PT were asked questions to confirm their answers in the survey, they did not show the same answers. It can be said that the answer to the opposite in the interview shows the characteristics of humans who have a growth mindset. This answer may also be influenced by other respondents who have previously answered in the discussion that they have a close mindset.

Self-Agency

In the section on self-agency, we find four points closely related to the meaning of self-agency and how it can reveal the student's personality. The four points are: realize that something is wrong, put ourselves as part of the problem, put

ourselves as part of the solution to overcome the problems, and take on specific roles to make a difference.

The data show that the self-agency among students varies from one institution to another institution. Based on the descriptive statistics, the self-agency of Sanata Dharma students generally is higher than the other universities. As we can see, Sanata Dharma's percentage is 74,09%, while the other universities are 64,15%. The difference between the two results is 9,94%.

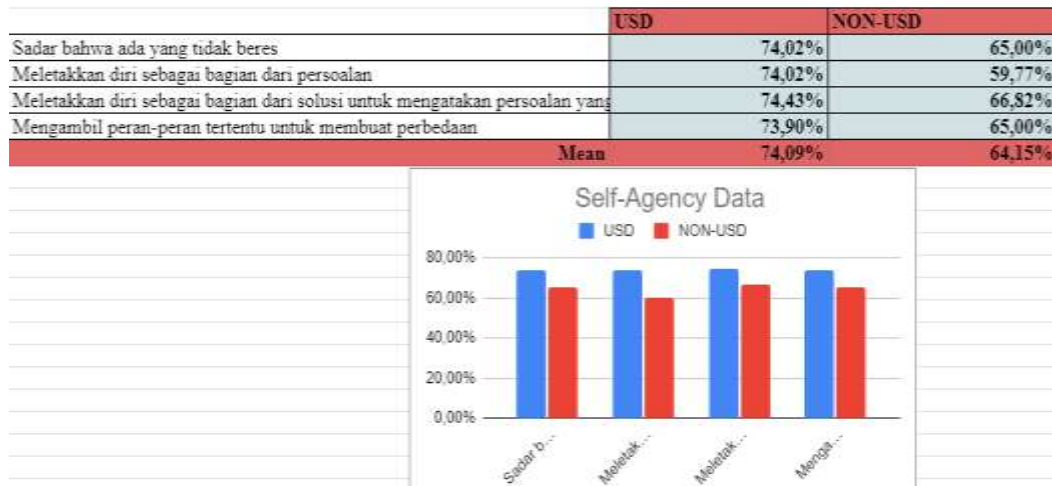


figure 2.1 the result of Sanata Dharma and other universities average of Self-Agency

The total of Sanata Dharma University students who filled the survey is 51 students. Meanwhile, the total of other universities is 110 students collected from Indonesia students' representatives. However, we are not sure whether the difference is statistically significant or not. So, we ran the ANOVA test. The result of the ANOVA test shows that the difference is statistically different. The result of ANOVA (inferential statistics) of their self-agency shows that at points 1-3, generally, the difference between Sanata Dharma's students and other universities is significantly different. It can be seen from figure 2.2 until 2.4.



figure 2.2. result of the significant difference of “realize that something is wrong” point 1

Result Details				
Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	2.5111	1	2.5111	F = 5.18242
Within-treatments	77.0417	159	0.4845	
Total	79.5528	160		

The F-ratio value is 5.18242. The p-value is .024151. The result is significant at $p < .05$.

figure 2.3. the result of significant difference between Sanata Dharma and other universities “Put ourselves as part of problem” Point 2

Result Details				
Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	4.5356	1	4.5356	F = 8.16512
Within-treatments	88.3216	159	0.5555	
Total	92.8571	160		

The F-ratio value is 8.16512. The p-value is .004842. The result is significant at $p < .05$.

figure 2.4. the result of significant difference between Sanata Dharma and other universities “Put ourselves as the part of solution to overcome the problems” point 3

Result Details				
Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	2.0599	1	2.0599	F = 3.8466
Within-treatments	85.1451	159	0.5355	
Total	87.205	160		

The F-ratio value is 3.8466. The p-value is .051593. The result is *not* significant at $p < .05$.

figure 2.5. the result of significant difference between Sanata Dharma and other universities "take on certain roles to make a difference" point 4

There is only one point that is not significant, at point 4, "take on certain roles to make a difference" (see figure 3.4). Although from descriptive statistics, it is shown that the percentage of Sanata Dharma in points four is higher than the other universities, but inferential statistics and interviews show that the difference is not significant, therefore it can be concluded that at the fourth point, taking roles in certain activities tends to be the same in value.

Besides being supported by ANOVA (inferential statistic), the interview results also support that Sanata Dharma students show better self-agency by their consistency while answering our deep questions. There is a unique fact that Sanata Dharma University implements the Agnitian value, which is "reflection." So generally, the subjects in Sanata Dharma give students spaces to reflect on themselves and their environment. Meanwhile, the other universities tend to have lower self-agency because they are given little space to share their reflection. It is proven from the survey, interview, and ANOVA. Therefore, it cannot be denied that Sanata Dharma University students' have better self-agency because the campus is also one of the supports.

Perceived quality of teaching

The result from the FGD has strengthened the data from the questionnaire. The data showed that the lecturer from USD is more superior to the lecturer outside USD. It is shown from five criteria that have been stated in the questionnaire, four of which, USD got a higher score than non-USD. From this, we can see that the USD score is statistically higher, and it means the lecturer in USD is better at giving explanations toward the homework, giving materials, and managing their time between work and housework. From the data that the researchers had gathered, we can see and conclude that the lecturer's way from USD and non-USD is relatively the same. What makes the difference is that the lecturer from USD tends to give more reflection to the students. It resulted in the USD students having stronger self-agency than others from non-USD. Students with stronger self-agency are better at managing impressions, making decisions, negotiating, controlling, manipulating, deceiving, and others (Blumer's 1969). The other reason why USD got a higher score than non-USD is that the University of Sanata Dharma has been operating for a long time, and the lecturer is more mature and ready to teach with various materials.

The researchers have conducted online interviews with two students from USD and two students from outside USD. The first point is about the clarity of the assignments and given homework. Students from USD stated that the lecturers are already clear enough in giving explanations, but students from outside USD stated that some of the lecturers are still not clear enough to clarify the assignments. It is also proved with the Anova. When the researcher compared the two data, the result was not significant (see Figure 3.1.)

Result Details				
Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	2.0208	1	2.0208	F = 3.14534
Within-treatments	102.1531	159	0.6425	
Total	104.1739	160		

The F-ratio value is 3.14534. The p-value is .078858. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.

Calculate Reset

Figure 3.1. Result of ANOVA point 1 about the clarity of the assignments.

The second point is about the variety of materials and learning. Students from USD stated that only some of the lecturers gave various assignments and homework. Some lecturers do not vary the assignments, but they can follow and enjoy the process because they like reading and analyzing particular topics. The other said that the most important is the method the lecturer used to teach. It must be fun and understandable so that the students can enjoy and follow the lesson well. At the same time, students from outside USD stated that the materials were given monotony. No various activities, but the method was quite interesting. It is also proved that the result was not significant when the researcher conducted the Anova (see Figure 3.2.)

Result Details				
Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	1.1474	1	1.1474	F = 2.15284
Within-treatments	84.7408	159	0.533	
Total	85.8882	160		

The F-ratio value is 2.15284. The p-value is .144282. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.

Calculate Reset

Figure 3.2. Result of ANOVA point 2 about the variety of the materials.

The third point is about the feedback from the lecturer. The data that have gathered stated that USD got a lower score than non-USD for this point. It is also proved when the researcher conducted the interview. Students from outside USD stated that there was direct feedback for them, especially after the presentation. While students from USD stated that the feedback given by the lecturer was good already, but it can be improved. Some of the lecturers used to give feedback, and some did not. When the researcher conducted the Anova, the result was not significant (see Figure 3.3.).

Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	0.6228	1	0.6228	F = 1.05764
Within-treatments	93.6257	159	0.5888	
Total	94.2484	160		

The F-ratio value is 1.05764. The p-value is .305317. The result is not significant at p = .05.

Calculate Reset

Figure 3.3. Result of ANOVA point 3 about the feedback.

The fourth point is about the willingness of the lecturer to understand students' difficulty. At this point USD got a higher point than non-USD. It is shown during the interview, students from USD stated that the lecturer could spend their time between the house work and the college work. The lecturers were willing to have the discussion with the students. For example, when the students wanted to present a presentation in class and were facing difficulties, the lecturers were willing to send a voice note through WA, send a draft to be revised and send additional materials. The lecturer from USD was willing to ask the students personally. So there is no gap between teacher and students. While students from outside USD stated that there were only some of the lecturers who could understand students' difficulties. Some of the others did not want to know and only gave short explanations toward particular works. When the researcher conducted the Anova, the result was not significant (see Figure 3.4.)

Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	0.268	1	0.268	F = 0.42379
Within-treatments	100.5519	159	0.6324	
Total	100.8199	160		

The F-ratio value is 0.42379. The p-value is .519955. The result is not significant at p = .05.

Calculate Reset

Figure 3.4. Result of ANOVA point 4 about the willingness of the lecturer.

The last point is about the freedom to choose the media. Both the students from USD and non-USD stated that the lecturer was still dominant in choosing the media for their assignments. However, if the students had difficulties doing the assignments, the lecturer was willing to help them. Students from USD stated that the media was not free yet to choose, but it was varied. If students submit through different media, maybe it will be hard for the lecturer to assess. At this point, USD got a higher score than non-USD. But when the researcher conducted the Anova, the result was significant (see figure 3.5)

Result Details				
Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	4.9901	1	4.9901	F = 8.03178
Within-treatments	98.7963	159	0.6213	
Total	103.7864	160		

The F-ratio value is 8.03178. The p-value is .005193. The result is significant at $\alpha = .05$.

Calculate Reset

Figure 3.5. Result of ANOVA point 5 about freedom to choose the media.

Conclusion

Students from various universities have shown different results in the context of facing the COVID19 pandemic. Students from USD showed significant results in a statistically sound connotation in the growth mindset context compared to students from STKIP PT. In addition, here is the conclusion of self-agency, that there is a significant difference between Sanata Dharma University and other universities, especially from points 1-3. Sanata Dharma students have a better understanding and implementation to reflect on themselves and take part in their environment because there is a unique fact that Sanata Dharma University implements the Agnitian value, which is "reflection." However, the other universities tend to have lower self-agency because they are given little space for reflecting. In the context of perceived quality of teaching, the researcher got the result from the students' perspective, and the researcher concluded that statistically, USD got a higher score than non-USD. It was 80%, 4 out of 5 aspects. However, when the researcher conducted the ANOVA, the first four points of the result were not significant. Only the last point, which is about the freedom to choose the media, is significant. The researcher concluded that even though USD got higher scores statistically than the other universities, USD's lecturers teach relatively the same as lecturers from outside USD.

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