



Writing to Celebrate Happiness

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ABSTRACT

Happiness is a goal for every individual, achieved through various means. Although the standards and forms of happiness vary from person to person, happiness is an indicator of mental health. Achieving happiness can be achieved by fulfilling physical needs, but it is also important to fulfill non-physical needs to balance body and mind. The urgency of this research is that writing is one solution offered in efforts to address deteriorating mental health. Writing has been proven to be an effective means of controlling and managing stress (coping with stress). This writing activity will have an even more positive impact when done in ways that bring joy. This community service activity took the form of a writing seminar with the theme "Writing to Celebrate Happiness." In general, the goal of this research was to provide understanding and scientific insight to the target group (students and university students) so they can cope with stress by writing about their emotional experiences. Specifically, the goal was to equip students and university students with the knowledge to overcome stress through writing about joyous experiences.

Keywords: Happiness, writing, catharsis, coping, stress

1. Introduction

One issue that requires attention in the world of education and society in general is stress. In college and university students, stress occurs during learning activities,

interactions with classmates, adaptation to the academic environment, and various challenges encountered during their education (Mulati & Purwandari, 2022; Mahmud & Uyun, 2016; Vinata & Purwanti, 2025). Attachment to peers, parents, school, and God also have

a negative relationship to stress levels in adolescents (Syifa & Purwandari, 2024). In fact, academic stress is one of the causes of depression in college students (Zhang et al., 2022). Depression is also linked to suicidal ideation (Ladi-Akinyemi et al., 2023).

According to data from the 2018 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas), 19 million Indonesians aged 15 and over experience mental and emotional disorders, while more than 12 million people aged 15 and over experience depression. Thus, 1 in 16 people over the age of 15 experience depression (Budiyanti & Oktavianto, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, psychological stress is a common occurrence among healthcare workers working under pressure. Meanwhile, research by Faradina, Khairani, Sari, Rahma, & Mawarpury (2022) found that 7.8% of Acehnese people experienced high levels of stress during COVID-19, 70.7% moderate levels, and the remainder low levels. If not managed properly, this stress will disrupt their mental health. Mental health is an absolute requirement for achieving the Golden Indonesia Vision by 2045. This rationale underlies mental health as a health issue that remains crucial for research.

To address these challenges, students must develop coping skills, a term known as stress management (Purwandari et al., 2022). Successfully managing negative emotions in the form of stress can be a learning process (Dewi & Taufik, 2022). Writing is a proven effective way to cope with stress. Research shows that expressive writing can help reduce psychological stress (Procaccia et al., 2021). Research by Crowley, Denes, Ponivas, Makos, & Whitt (2021) also identified that writing can help individuals forgive after a violation.

Partners for this activity are the Faculty of Science and Technology of the State Islamic University (UIN) Ar-Raniry Aceh and the Aceh Region Lingkar Pena Forum. Both UIN Ar-Raniry and FLP Aceh Region have

students and community members who are predominantly young, still in high school or college. This age group is vulnerable to academic stress and depression. The ability to manage stress (coping with stress) is crucial for them. Writing is an activity closely related to their daily lives. However, it is not practiced routinely because the benefits associated with stress management are not yet fully understood.

2. Method

The partners for this activity are the Faculty of Science and Technology of UIN Ar-Raniry and members of the Aceh Regional Pen Circle Forum. The activity is packaged as a seminar with the theme "Writing to Celebrate Happiness," which will be attended by 70 students from the Faculty of Science and Technology of UIN Ar-Raniry and members of the Aceh Regional Pen Circle Forum. The seminar will present various expressive writing techniques as coping mechanisms for daily stress. Participants are asked to practice writing about their experiences so that they can develop a way to express their feelings in a joyful way.

Participants attending the seminar and writing practice are asked to complete a questionnaire titled "My Days," which contains an open-ended questionnaire and a happiness scale. The open-ended questionnaire asks participants to describe their experiences over the past few days, which is used to assess their psychological state. The happiness scale used in this activity is the Happiness Scale developed by Sabila et al. (2023). This happiness scale consists of three aspects: a pleasant life, a meaningful life, and an engaged life. It contains 14 items, with 6 positive items and 8 unfavorable items. This scale aims to measure the level of happiness.

Table 1. Blueprint of the Happiness Scale

Numb.	Dimensions	Indicator	Item		Number of Items
			F	UF	
1.	A pleasant life (pleasant life)	Having many enjoyable experiences	1,4	8,12	4
		A meaningful life	3	11	2
2.	Self-involvement (engaged life)	Building positive relationships with others	5	9,13	3
3.	Keterlibatan diri (engaged life)	Having hobbies that bring joy		7	1
		Being actively involved in various activities	2,6	10,14	4
Total			6	8	14

3. Results and Discussion

This Community Service was held in the Seminar Room of the Architecture Study Program, Faculty of Science and Technology, UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, on May 22, 2024. The event was held in collaboration with the Banda Aceh Pen Circle Forum and the Architecture Study Program, FST UIN Ar-Raniry. The event took place from 2:00 PM to 4:30 PM WIB, attended by 150 participants. The event was divided into two sessions. The first session was a presentation of material on writing as a means of coping with stress and achieving happiness, presented by Dr. Eny Purwandari, M.Si. In this session, the speaker also provided several practical ways to write a diary to manage stress and optimize happiness. Participants were asked to write down the most memorable feelings and experiences in their lives.



Figure 1. Group photo of the presenter and participants

In the second session, the second speaker, Yeni Mulati, M.Si., explained how to cultivate writing habits to further benefit professional, work, or academic fields. She encouraged participants to write more, citing its numerous benefits, both for mental health and for enhancing future achievements.



Figure 2. Photo with the presenter

At the end of the event, the presenter provided a Google Form containing open-ended questions for participants to fill out voluntarily. Eight participants completed the Google Form. Below are the results of the open-ended questions from the Google Form.

Table 2. Open Ended Results

Numb.	Initial Name	Gender	Age	My story today	The essence of the story
1	Ae	Woman	35	Today I am happy, because I met many friends that I love. The energy of love from my friends makes me excited...., if I don't meet them I easily get annoyed, bad mood, no enthusiasm	Friends as encouragement
2	B	Woman	30	Bismillah... In the past few days, Allah has given me extraordinary surprises, almost all of which have brought me happiness. To the point where I feel that Allah is All-Good, even though I am still far from good. Alhamdulillah, the prayers I used to pray and even those I only thought about have been answered by Allah. I feel that life is like a "game" where there are challenges, if you successfully level up you get a reward, another challenge, if you successfully level up you get a reward. So, for some reason, I remain on alert when I am happy. Because maybe there are trials ahead. Hehe. But after trials, humans are patient and trust in God, God willing, believing that Allah will provide a way out, level up, and get a reward. Although sometimes I mention "Ya Allah, Allah" a lot when I am just given a trial. I am very fortunate that Allah has given me the opportunity to be in a family filled with abundant love. I am grateful when I am given awareness when I make mistakes and given the opportunity to correct them. I want to be a better person from day to day. I strive to make those around me feel happy and comfortable, God willing, with Allah's permission.	Life's blessings
3	Au	Man	30	Thank God, all is well. Days go by as usual, nothing much has changed. It's just that over the past few months, I've been starting a business, which has taken a significant toll on my finances, energy, and time.	Starting a business
4	Ar	Woman	29	Today is my day off from work, but I'm still at home working because I have a project, it's quite busy being a housewife with a 7-month-old child and working. I often complain, but I have to go through it, like any other human being. This work project is fun because it's a hobby, unlike my daily work which is basically controlling human resource performance. Controlling a system is easier than controlling humans in my opinion... because we can adjust the system according to our abilities, while humans need to be polite, because each individual's cultural nature is different... that's all for now.	Fun projects
5	HS	Man	13	Today I feel happy because I can be with my family.	Family

Numb.	Initial Name	Gender	Age	My story today	The essence of the story
6	SA	Woman	40	These past few days have been extraordinary. While everything has been beyond our family's daily routine, I also feel like we've accomplished something truly extraordinary. Although I've shed tears over the past few days, I'm incredibly grateful. The end of June marked the beginning of preparations for our first child's arrival at college. I felt both emotional and awkward, as well as awe-inspiring at the timing God has blessed us with. I felt awkward because of the many preparations we had to make, including renewing our first child's passport and crossing to Sabang because the immigration lines where we live were so long. We only needed our passports to transit through Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to save on airfare. As we entered early July, we reflected on our 19th year of marriage and our first child's 18th year of young adulthood. I've learned so much in this school of life while navigating the stages of marriage and motherhood. I feel so blessed. When my husband went to take care of our first child, I had to handle a lot of things on my own. It was only a week, but the emotions were like a roller coaster. I was no longer used to riding a motorcycle alone, but this time I had to do it. When I did, I felt amazing.	Blessings of life
7	A	Man	27	-	-
8	R	Man	36	Today I haven't slept, because I was watching football, at 2:00 AM I followed the European Cup between Spain vs. France. While waiting for the EURO semifinals last night I watched the movie #theconheartist after an hour of searching with the keyword funny movies that don't make me sleepy. Funny Thai movies are usually never disappointing. Ina in this film is played by @baifern.pimchanok_ she is here as a bucin girl who is deceived by her ex-boyfriend who likes to compliment. She almost gets deceived again for the second time by a caller who promises a lot of money but after transferring 10% tax. Because Ina is a former bank employee she knows this kind of fraudulent plot.	Watching football and Thai movies

Berdasarkan jawaban dari open ended question tersebut, ada beberapa hal yang menjadi sebab kebahagiaan dari para peserta, yaitu kehadiran teman dan keluarga sebagai penyemangat, konsep keberkahan dalam hidup, melakukan kegiatan proyek-proyek

yang menyenangkan termasuk bisnis dan menjalankan hobi.

Selain hasil kuesioner terbuka, juga diperoleh hasil pengisian skala kebahagiaan. Secara deskriptif hasil sebagai berikut:

Item 1. My life is filled with joy

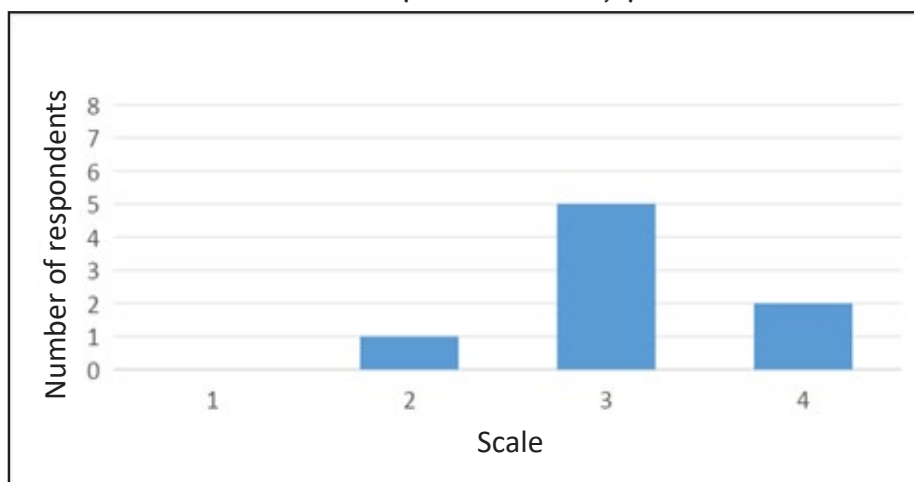


Figure 3. Item 1 Diagram

In item 1, 1 respondent chose to disagree, 5 respondents agreed, and 2 respondents strongly agreed. This item is a favorable item that indicates support for the indicator. The indicator for this item is having many pleasant experiences that reveal the dimensions of a pleasant life. This means that 1 respondent who chose to disagree had an unpleasant life

in the last few days. 5 respondents who agreed indicated having an enjoyable life in the last few days. And 2 respondents who strongly agreed indicated having a very pleasant life in the last few days. A pleasant life is an individual's happiness with high pleasant experiences, low unpleasant experiences, and having the ability to increase happiness in the future.

Item 2. I feel happy when I talk to other people.

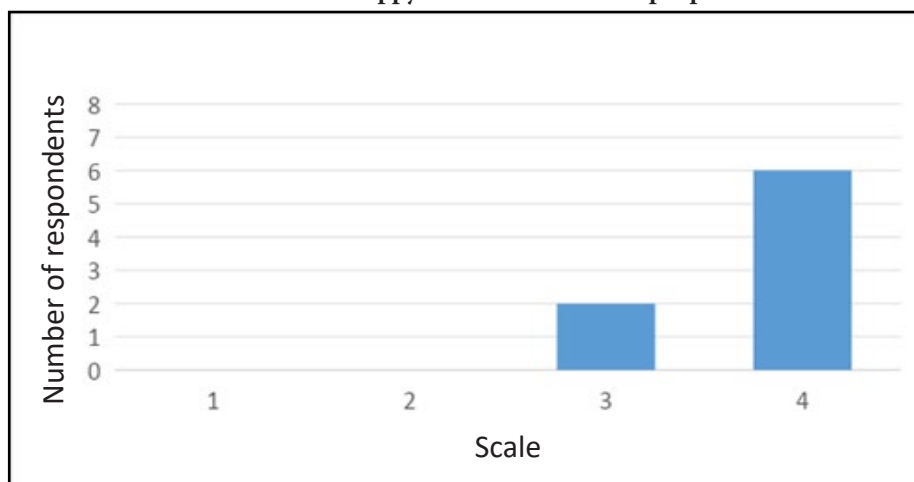


Figure 4. Item Diagram 2

In item 2, 2 respondents agreed and 6 respondents strongly agreed. This item is a favorable item, indicating support for the indicator. The indicator for this item is actively involved in various activities that reveal the

dimension of self-involvement (engaged life). This means that 2 respondents who chose to disagree were actively involved in various activities in the past few days. And 6 respondents who strongly agreed indicated

actively involved in various activities in the past few days. Self-involvement (engaged life) is when an individual involves all aspects

of themselves (physical, cognitive, and emotional) in the life activities they undertake.

Item 3. I have happy plans for the future

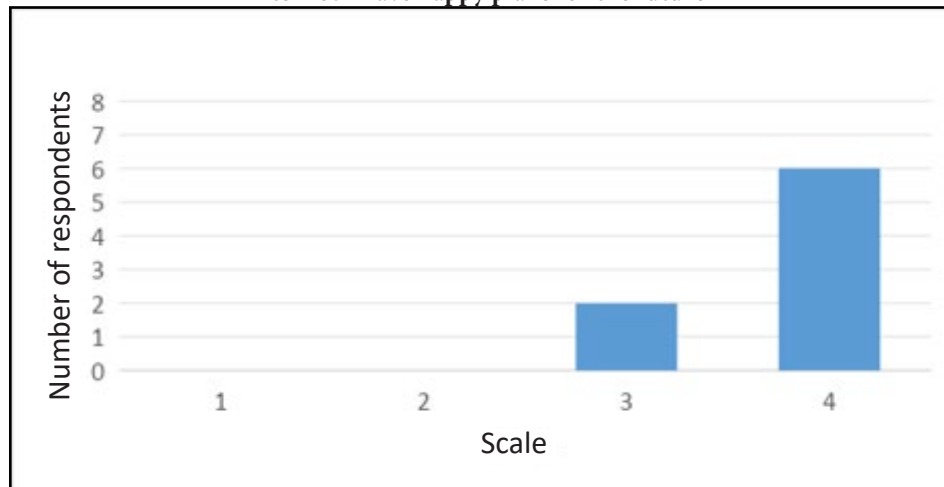
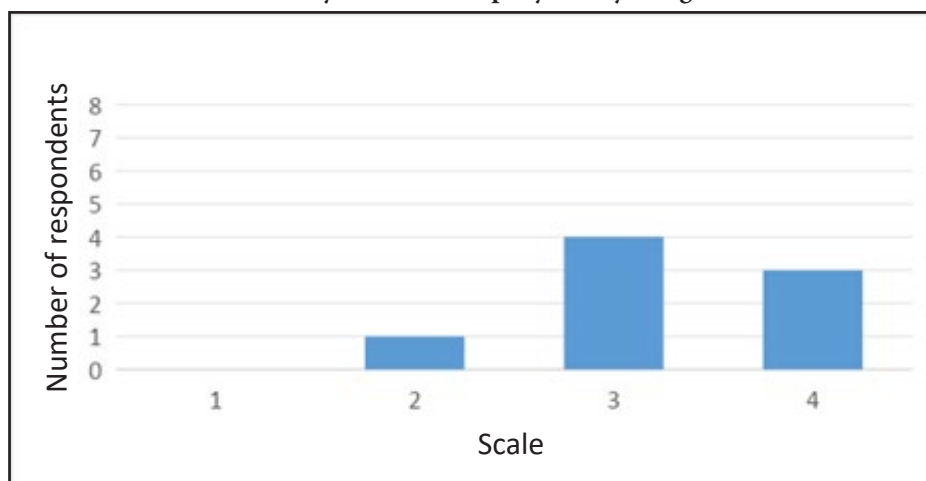


Figure 5. Item Diagram 3

In item 3, 2 respondents agreed and 6 respondents strongly agreed. This item is a favorable item, indicating support for the indicator. The indicator for this item is having hopes and goals for happiness in the future, which reveals the dimensions of a pleasant life. This means that 2 respondents who chose to agree had hopes and goals for happiness

in the future in the past few days. And 6 respondents who strongly agreed indicated having hopes and goals for happiness in the future in the past few days. A pleasant life is an individual's happiness with high levels of pleasant experiences, low levels of unpleasant experiences, and the ability to increase happiness in the future.

Item 4. Saya merasa hidup saya menyenangkan



Gambar 6. Diagram Item 4

In item 4, 1 respondent disagreed, 4 respondents agreed, and 3 respondents strongly agreed. This item is a favorable item, indicating

support for the indicator. The indicator for this item is having many pleasant experiences that reveal the dimensions of a pleasant life.

This means that 1 respondent who chose to disagree had many pleasant experiences in the last few days, 4 respondents who chose to agree had many pleasant experiences in the last few days, and 3 respondents who strongly

agreed indicated having many pleasant experiences in the last few days. A pleasant life is an individual's happiness with high pleasant experiences, low unpleasant experiences, and the ability to increase happiness in the future.

Item 5. I feel accepted in my circle of friends

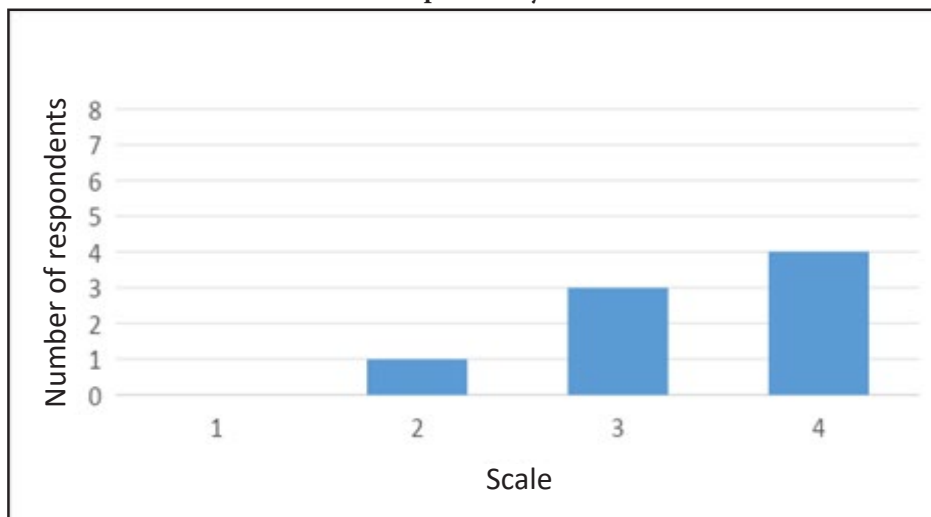


Figure 7. Item 5 Diagram

In item 5, 2 respondents disagreed, 3 respondents agreed, and 4 respondents strongly agreed. This item is a favorable item that indicates support for the indicator. The indicator of this item is establishing positive relationships with others that reveal the dimensions of a meaningful life. This means that 2 respondents who chose to disagree have established positive relationships with others

in the last few days, 3 respondents chose to agree to establish positive relationships with others. And 4 respondents who strongly agreed to establish positive relationships with others in the last few days. A meaningful life, namely an individual who finds meaning in life when his life path is made into a meaningful, purposeful, and understandable experience.

Item 6. I enjoy discussion activities with other people.

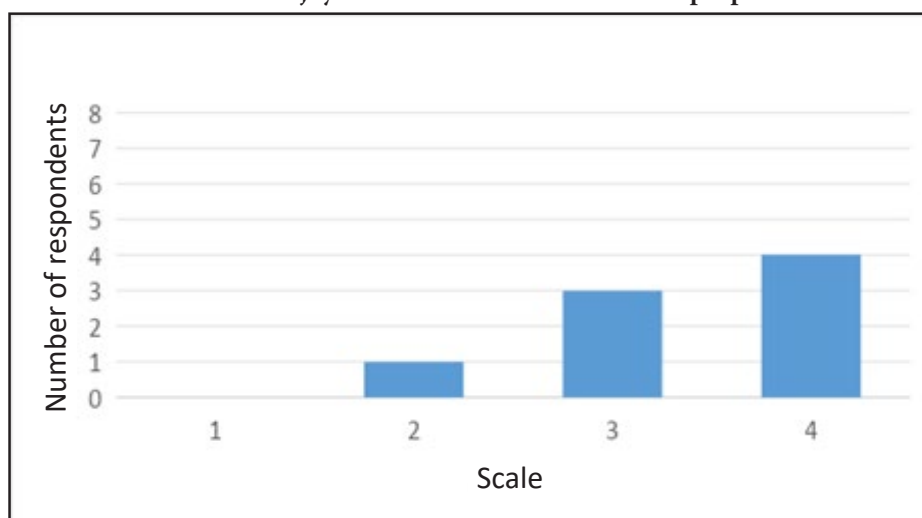


Figure 8. Item 6 Diagram

In item 6, 4 respondents agreed and 4 respondents strongly agreed. This item is a favorable item, indicating support for the indicator. The indicator for this item is actively involved in various activities that reveal the dimension of self-involvement (engaged life). This means that 4 respondents who chose to agree were actively involved in various activities

in the last few days. And 4 respondents who strongly agreed indicated actively involved in various activities in the last few days. Self-involvement (engaged life) is when an individual involves all aspects of themselves (physical, cognitive, and emotional) in the life activities they undertake.

Item 7. Hobbies I pursue independently are more enjoyable

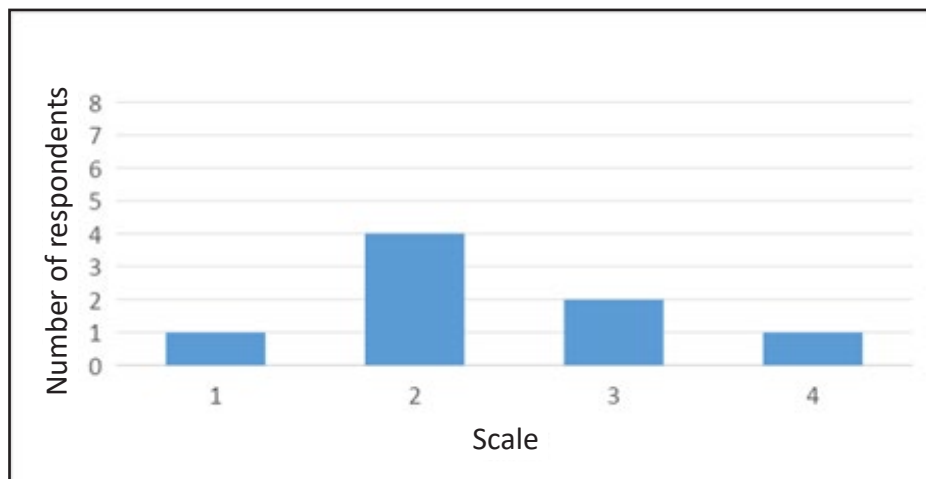


Figure 9. Item 7 Diagram

In item 7, 1 respondent strongly agreed, 4 respondents agreed, 2 respondents disagreed, and 1 strongly disagreed. This item is an unfavorable item that indicates it does not support the indicator. The indicator of this item is having a hobby that brings joy which reveals the dimension of self-involvement (engaged life). This means that 1 respondent who chose strongly agree has a hobby that brings joy in

the last few days, 4 respondents agreed to have a hobby that brings joy in the last few days, 2 respondents who disagree have a hobby that brings joy in the last few days, and 1 respondent who strongly disagree has a hobby that brings joy in the last few days. Self-involvement (engaged life), namely when an individual involves all aspects of oneself (physical, cognitive, and emotional) in the life activities carried out.

Item 8. My life experience is filled with sadness

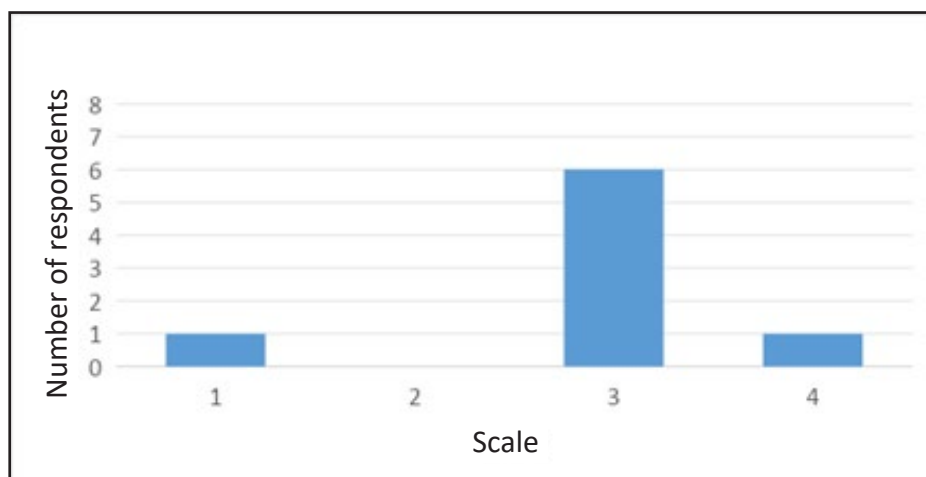


Figure 10. Item 8 diagram

In item 8, 1 respondent strongly agreed, 6 respondents disagreed, and 1 respondent strongly disagreed. This item is an unfavorable item, indicating that it does not support the indicator. The indicator for this item is having many pleasant experiences, which expresses the dimension of a pleasant life. This means that 1 respondent who chose strongly agree had many pleasant experiences in the last few

days, 6 respondents who disagreed indicated having many pleasant experiences in the last few days, and 1 respondent who chose strongly disagree had many pleasant experiences in the last few days. A pleasant life is an individual's happiness with high pleasant experiences, low unpleasant experiences, and the ability to increase happiness in the future.

Item 9. I have strained relationships with other people

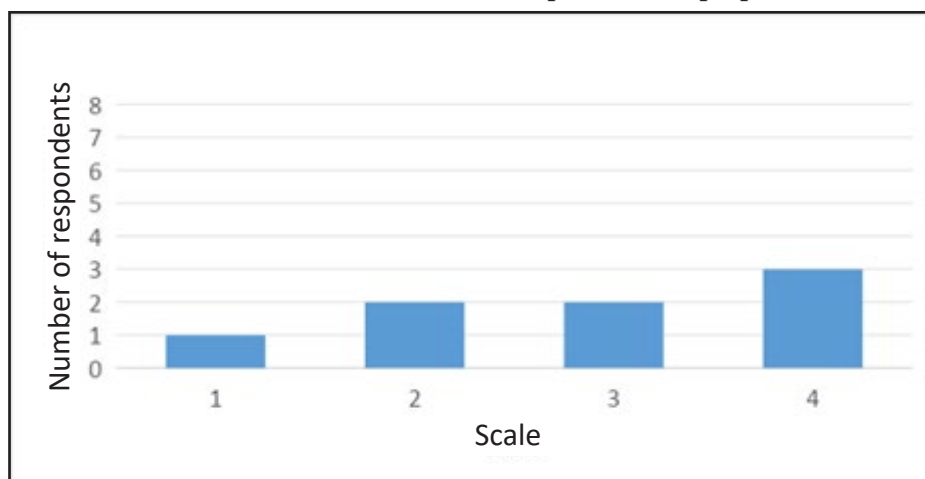


Figure 11. Item 9 Diagram

In item 9, 1 respondent strongly agreed, 2 respondents agreed, 2 respondents disagreed, and 3 respondents strongly disagreed. This item is an unfavorable item that indicates it does not support the indicator. The indicator of this item is establishing positive relationships with others that reveal the dimensions of a meaningful life. This means that 1 respondent who chose strongly agrees to have established positive relationships with others in the last few days, 2 respondents chose to agree to

have established positive relationships with others in the last few days, 2 respondents chose to disagree to have established positive relationships with others in the last few days, and 3 respondents who strongly disagree to have established positive relationships with others in the last few days. A meaningful life, namely an individual who finds meaning in life when his life path is made into a meaningful, purposeful, and understandable experience.

Item 10. Being alone is my favorite time

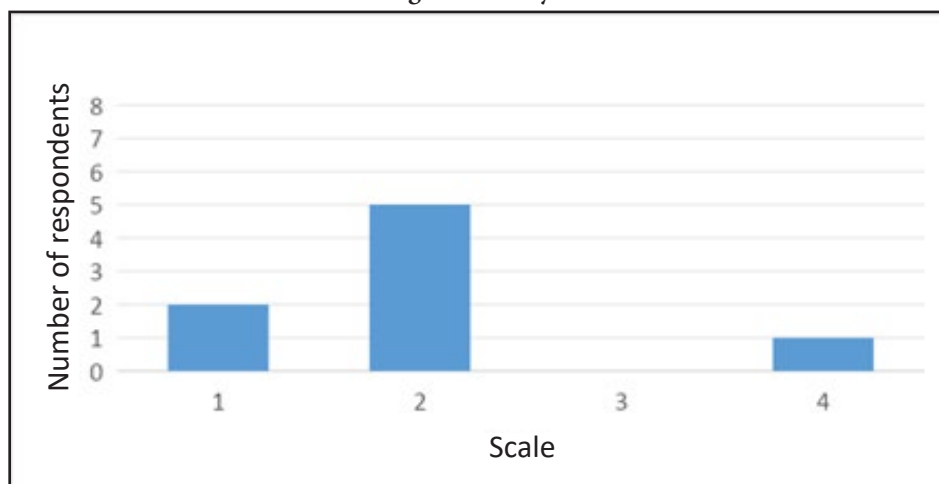


Figure 12. Item 10 Diagram

In item 10, 2 respondents strongly agreed, 5 respondents agreed, and 1 respondent strongly disagreed. This item is an unfavorable item that indicates it does not support the indicator. The indicator of this item is being actively involved in various activities that reveal the dimension of self-involvement (engaged life). This means that 2 respondents who chose to strongly agree were actively involved in various activities in

the last few days, 5 respondents chose to agree were actively involved in various activities in the last few days, and 1 respondent who strongly disagreed was actively involved in various activities in the last few days. Self-involvement (engaged life), namely when an individual involves all aspects of themselves (physical, cognitive, and emotional) in the life activities carried out.

Item 11. I feel like tomorrow is scary

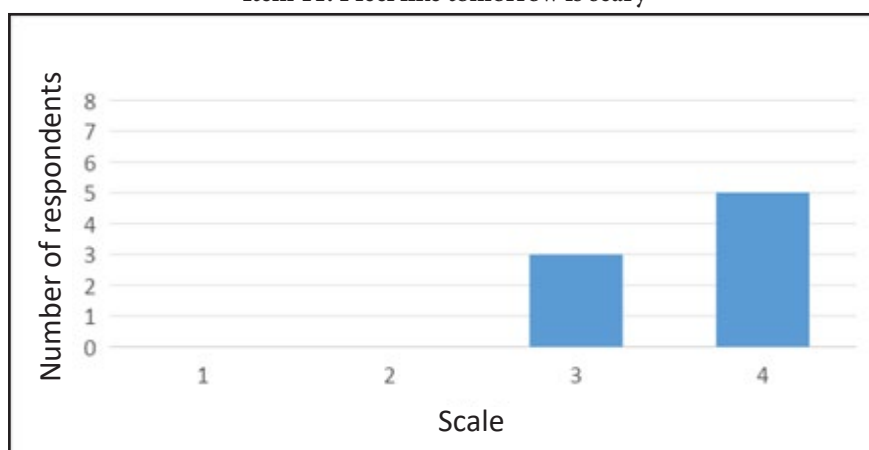


Figure 13. Item 11 diagram

In item 11, 3 respondents disagreed and 5 respondents strongly disagreed. This item is an unfavorable item, indicating that it does not support the indicator. The indicator for this item is having hopes and goals for happiness in the future, which expresses the

dimension of a pleasant life. This means that 3 respondents who chose to disagree had hopes and goals for happiness in the future in the past few days. And 5 respondents who strongly disagreed indicated having hopes and goals for happiness in the future in the past few days. A

pleasant life is an individual's happiness with high levels of pleasant experiences, low levels of unpleasant experiences, and the ability to increase happiness in the future.

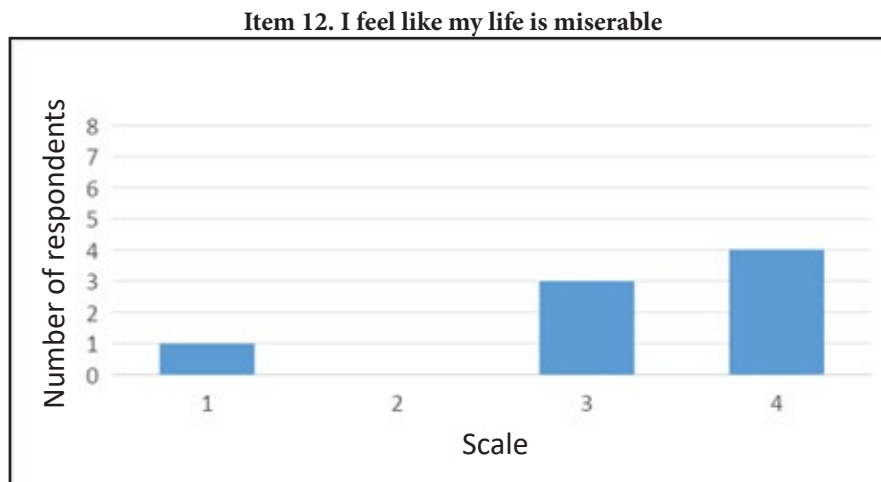


Figure 14. Item 12 Diagram

In item 12, 1 respondent strongly agreed, 3 respondents disagreed, and 4 respondents strongly disagreed. This item is an unfavorable item indicating that it does not support the indicator. The indicator for this item is having many pleasant experiences that reveal the dimensions of a pleasant life. This means that 1 respondent who chose to strongly agree had many pleasant experiences in the last few days, 3 respondents who disagreed had many pleasant experiences, and 4 respondents who strongly disagreed indicated having many pleasant experiences in the last few days. A pleasant life is an individual's happiness with high pleasant experiences, low unpleasant experiences, and having the ability to increase happiness in the future.

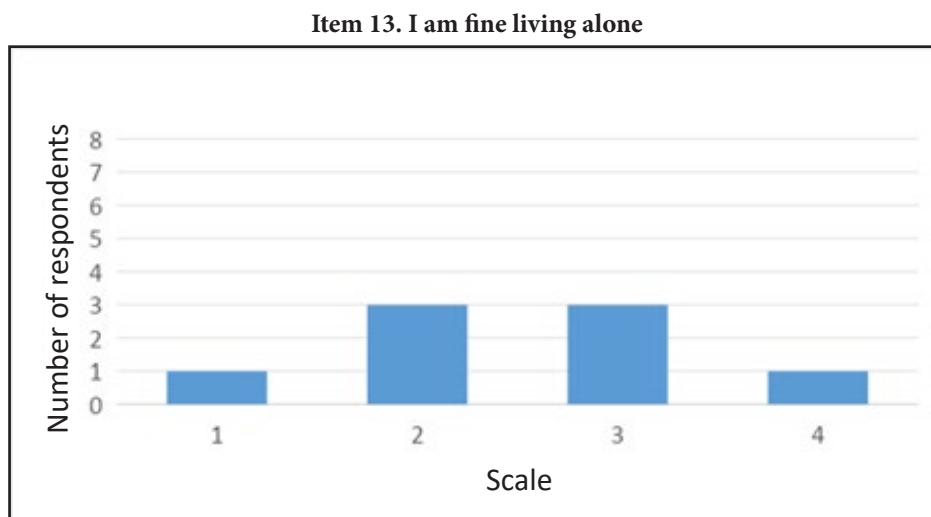


Figure 15. Item 13 Diagram

In item 13, 1 respondent strongly disagreed, 3 respondents disagreed, 3 respondents agreed, and 1 respondent strongly agreed. This item is an unfavorable item indicating that it does not support the indicator. The indicator of this item is establishing positive relationships with others that reveal the dimensions of a meaningful life. This means that 1 respondent who chose strongly disagreed to establish positive relationships with others in the last few days, 3 respondents chose

disagree to establish positive relationships with others, 3 respondents chose agree to establish positive relationships with others, and 1 respondent who strongly agreed to establish positive relationships with others in

the last few days. A meaningful life, namely an individual who obtains meaning in life when his life path is made into a meaningful, purposeful, and understandable experience.

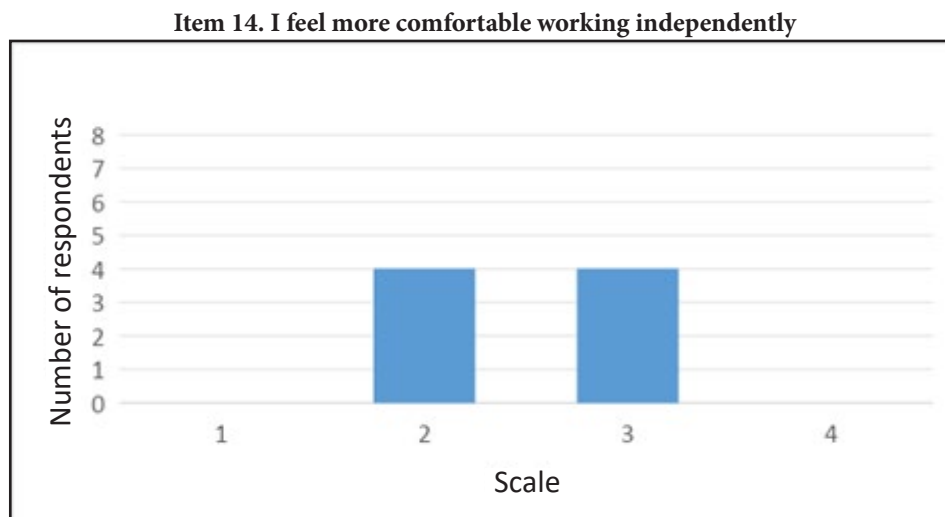


Figure 16. Item 14 Diagram

Four respondents agreed with this item and four disagreed. This item is considered unfavorable, indicating that it does not support the indicator. The indicator for this item is actively involved in various activities, which expresses the dimension of engaged life. This means that four respondents who agreed indicated they were actively involved in various activities in the past few days. Four respondents who disagreed indicated they were actively involved in various activities in the past few days. Engaged life occurs when an individual involves all aspects of themselves (physical, cognitive, and emotional) in their life activities.

3. Conclusion

Happiness is essentially a work of art. Work that can be shaped and built, although it's

not as easy as turning the palm of your hand. One way to build happiness is by managing feelings to be positive through writing. Writing about emotional experiences is a form of catharsis that releases negative energy and restructures thinking. Writing is easy, so it can be continued without expensive costs and without social threats.

4. Acknowledgment

Thanks and appreciation are given to various parties, both funders and other parties who have participated in helping to implement the service program, if you wish to add, write in this section.

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