

# Psychological Study of the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Students: The Effect of Empathy and Resilience on Policy Acceptances and its Implications on Compliance

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## Abstract

*The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about fundamental changes to the way people live their daily activities. This condition makes certain institutions, especially universities, follow pandemic policies by limiting activities on campus and carrying out online learning. Students must experience a difficult situation with these conditions. This study seeks to examine how the influence of student empathy and resilience in the city of Jakarta on the acceptance of government policies that have implications for compliance. This study involved 641,047 respondents from over 288 universities, using descriptive and verification analysis methods with structural equation modelling and confirmatory factor analysis methods. The results of the study indicate that empathy and resilience have a positive and significant impact on policy acceptance which also has a positive and significant impact on compliance. These results confirm that the adherence of students who represent the academic community to the rules and policies set by the government is an important capital needed to effectively deal with the Covid-19 Pandemic.*

*Keywords: Acceptance, Empathy, Obedience, Resilience, Pandemic.*

## Introduction

Since Covid-19 hit various countries, including Indonesia, there have been fundamental changes in how people carry out their daily activities. The Indonesian government, for example, to prevent the spread of the virus in the community, must issue policies related to health protocols and restrictions on activities, which make people have to change various daily habits in their lives so far. In this case, one of the fundamental changes due to the policy related to the pandemic is the limitation of educational and learning activities, where

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educational institutions, from schools to universities, are required to conduct online learning (on the network) as stipulated in the Director General's Circular Letter. Higher Education Number 4 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Face-to-face Learning for the Academic Year of 2021/2022 and Guidelines for the Implementation of Learning in the Covid-19 Pandemic Period issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Student behaviour, from another perspective, especially in big cities like Jakarta and its surroundings, also shows positive behaviour during the pandemic namely empathy and resilience (Fitriyana & Merida, 2021; Rosaline & Anggraeni, 2020). Positive behavior shown as one of community's ability to accept government policies and regulations that apply during the pandemic, apart from other factors, plays a major role in this acceptance and has implications for their compliance (Bellato, 2020; Reicher & Bauld, 2021). However, at certain developmental ages, compliance that is a psychological condition consisting of dimensions such as belief in the benefits, acceptance of conditions and consequences, and concrete actions to implement rules or policies as an implementation of compliance (Bigo et al., 2021; Christian & Sa'id, 2021; Passini & Morselli, 2010; Yuan et al., 2021), particularly among adolescents and early adulthood is often difficult to find because these ages are the ages where the subject wants freedom and a wide space of expression.

In this context, it is interesting to realise that policies that change people's habits are logically hardly to accept, especially if these policies limit freedom and have the potential to hinder people's livelihoods (Bigo et al., 2021; Djalante et al., 2020; Rudianto et al., 2021; Duong & Hai Thi Thanh, 2022; Kurtenbach & Strong, 2022). Hence, this study aim to examine in more depth how empathy and resilience influence the acceptance of government policies that have implications for student compliance with health protocols and restrictions on learning activities in early 2022. In particular, this study was conducted among students at various universities in the city of Jakarta and its surrounding towns (Bogor, Depok, Tangerang) to see how the level of student compliance and the influence of the variables mentioned earlier. In this case, what should be noted is that empathy, resilience, acceptance, or obedience are all variables that can be taught, educated, and trained (Indriani et al., 2020; Izzati et al., 2019; Yunita & Lee, 2021). Therefore, the results of this study can also provide an overview of how students obtain education and teaching at their respective universities.

## Method

The main purpose of this study is to discuss psychological variables in the context of the pandemic as a real situation that is being faced by contemporary society. The specific objectives of this study are as follows: First, to examine the suitability of the theoretical model of the effect of empathy and resilience on policy acceptance and its implications for compliance with empirical data; Second, to investigate the impact of policy acceptance on compliance; Third, examine the effect of empathy on policy acceptance; Fourth, examine the effect of resilience on policy acceptance; Fifth, examine the effect of compassion on compliance; and Sixth, analyse the impact of strength on compliance; Seventh, testing the product of empathy on compliance with acceptance as a mediator; and Eighth, examine the effect of resilience on compliance with favour as a mediator.

This study involved respondents from among students in the Jakarta area. The population in this study is students in the Jakarta area, totalling 641,047 students and spread over 288 universities. The study sample was taken using a cluster random sampling technique with the sample size calculated using Slovin notation, with as many as 394 students. In practice, students who become research respondents are determined by involving the following criteria: (1) Undergraduate students from various study programs at universities in the Jakarta city area; (2) Students who lived or resided in the city of Jakarta during the pandemic; (3) Maximum age of 25 years.

In the data analysis process, this study uses descriptive and verification analysis methods with structural equation modelling and confirmatory factor analysis methods to get a clear picture of the relationship between variables or the constructs forming the variables studied (Priadana, 2017; Sugiyono, 2016). The research procedures carried out are (1) reading and describing the Pandemic phenomenon as a difficult situation that makes the government have to issue various policies in the form of rules related to the obligation to implement health protocols and activity restrictions; (2) literature study and questionnaire distribution; (3) analysis and interpretation of study findings; and (4) preparation of study results.

The hypotheses built in this study are divided into two forms of hypotheses, namely major hypotheses and minor hypotheses. The major premise is that empathy and resilience influence policy acceptance, which impacts obedience.

Meanwhile, the minor hypotheses formulated in this study are as follows:

H1: The theoretical model of the effect of empathy and resilience on policy acceptance and its implications for obedience fits the empirical data.

H2: There is a positive and significant effect of policy acceptance on obedience

H3: There is a positive and significant effect of empathy on policy acceptance

H4: There is a positive and significant effect of resilience on policy acceptance

H5: There is a positive and significant effect of empathy on obedience

H6: There is a positive and significant effect of resilience on obedience

H7: There is a positive and significant effect of empathy on obedience with policy acceptance as a mediator

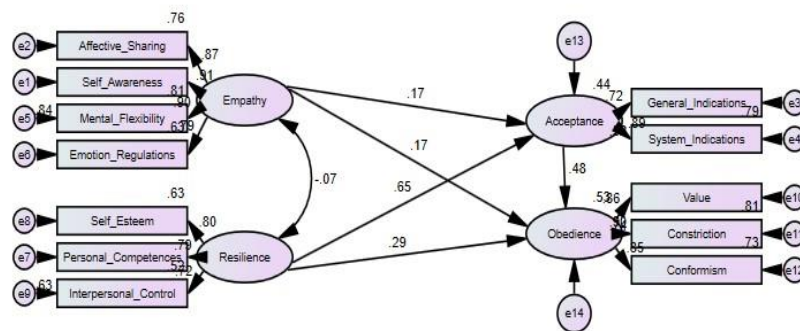
H8: There is a positive and significant effect of resilience on obedience with policy acceptance as a mediator

## Result and Discussion

### Model Feasibility Analysis

The test results of the model of the effect of empathy and resilience on policy acceptance and its implications for obedience using AMOS software can be seen in the following figure:

**Fig.1. Research Model Test**



Based on the AMOS output related to the research fit model, the following is a summary of the results of the feasibility test of the research model:

**Table 1. Summary of Research Model Feasibility Test Results**

Criteria	Cut-off Value	Results	Conclusion
Chi-Square	-	104.608	-
Probability	$\geq 0.05$	0.000	-
AGFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.932	Fit
GFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.958	Fit
TLI	$\geq 0.95$	0.974	Fit
NFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.966	Fit
CFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.981	Fit
RMSEA	$\leq 0.80$	0.55	Fit

The values of the various eligibility criteria set, as seen in the table above, such as AGFI, GFI, TLI, NFI, CFI, and RMSEA, all show that they have values that exceed the specified cut-off values. These results indicate that this research model is a fit.

**Hypothesis Test**

Hypothesis testing analyses the structural relationship between variables by measuring the loading factor value and the effect between variables. The test was carried out using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of the AMOS program/software, the following output is produced:

**Table 2. Regression Weight**

		Estimate	SE.	CR.	P	Label
Acceptance	<--- Empathy	.182	.054	3.349	***	par_9
Acceptance	<--- Resilience	.989	.107	9.248	***	par_12
Obedience	<--- Empathy	.165	.043	3.807	***	par_10
Obedience	<--- Acceptance	.427	.066	6.444	***	par_13
Obedience	<--- Resilience	.395	.097	4.073	***	par_14
Self_Awareness	<--- Empathy	1.000				
Affective_Sharing	<--- Empathy	.987	.038	25.851	***	par_1
General_Indications	<--- Acceptance	1.000				
System_Indications	<--- Acceptance	1.234	.096	12.894	***	par_2
Mental_Flexibility	<--- Empathy	.958	.035	27.443	***	par_3
Emotion_Regulations	<--- Empathy	.940	.045	21.055	***	par_4
Personal_Competerences	<--- Resilience	1.000				
Self_Esteem	<--- Resilience	1.142	.077	14.796	***	par_5
Interpersonal_Control	<--- Resilience	.884	.065	13.669	***	par_6
Value	<--- Obedience	1.000				
Constriction	<--- Obedience	1.070	.047	22.959	***	par_7
Conformism	<--- Obedience	.985	.046	21.381	***	par_8

While the loading factor value or the amount of influence between variables can be seen in the following table:

**Table 3. Standardised Regression Weight**

	Estimate
Acceptance <--- Empathy	.167
Acceptance <--- Resilience	.654
Obedience <--- Empathy	.168
Obedience <--- Acceptance	.477
Obedience <--- Resilience	.291

Based on the table above, there is a role for the independent variable (exogenous), Empathy and Resilience, to the dependent variable (endogenous) or obedience, which is mediated by the intervening variable or Policy Acceptance with different correlation significance values. However, based on Table 6, it can be seen that all variables have significant P values. As for the role or direct influence between the variables studied, it can be seen in the AMOS output table as follows:

**Table 4. Standardised Direct Effects**

	Resilience	Empathy	Acceptance	Obedience
Acceptance	.654	.167	.000	.000
Obedience	.291	.168	.477	.000

As seen in the table above, the empathy variable directly influences Acceptance and Compliance by 0.168 (16.8 per cent) and 0.167 (16.7 per cent, respectively). Resilience variables directly impact Acceptance and Compliance, respectively 0.654 (65.4 per cent) and 0.291 (29.1 per cent). Meanwhile, acceptance affects obedience by 0.477 or 47.7 per cent.

The indirect effects or roles of each variable can be seen in the AMOS output table as follows:

**Table 5. Standardised Indirect Effects**

	Resilience	Empathy	Acceptance	Obedience
Acceptance	.000	.000	.000	.000
Obedience	.312	.080	.000	.000

The indirect effect of Empathy on Obedience, as seen in the table above, is 0.080, and the indirect impact of Resilience on Obedience is 0.312. Given the role or direct and indirect influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable in this study, it is necessary to calculate the total role or influence as shown in the following table:

**Table 6. Standardised Total Effects**

	Resilience	Empathy	Acceptance	Obedience
Acceptance	.654	.167	.000	.000
Obedience	.603	.248	.477	.000

The total effect of Empathy on Acceptance and Obedience, as seen in the table above, is 0.167 and 0.248, respectively. The real impact of Resilience on Acceptance and Obedience is 0.654 and 0.603, respectively. Then the total effect of Acceptance on Obedience is 0.477. The variable that has the greatest full effect on Obedience is Resilience. Based on this output, the major hypothesis in this study can be accepted, namely: there is an effect of empathy and resilience on Policy Acceptance which has implications for obedience.

The results of minor hypothesis testing carried out to analyse how the research model that was built fit with empirical data, as well as how the correlation and role of each variable partially, are as follows:

1. Based on the feasibility test of the research model, it can be seen that the results of the fit index values for various model eligibility criteria have met the required fit criteria. Thus, the theoretical model of this study can be said to fit, or H1, that the theoretical model of the influence of empathy and resilience on policy acceptance and its implications for obedience works with empirical data can be accepted.
2. Based on the results of the analysis by referring to the AMOS output, it is known that the Critical Ratio (CR) value of Acceptance to Compliance is 6.444 ( $> 2.58$ ), and the P value is 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). This value indicates a positive and significant effect of Acceptance on Obedience. Thus, H2, that there is a positive and significant effect of policy acceptance on obedience, is acceptable.
3. Based on the analysis results by referring to the AMOS output, it is known that the Critical Ratio (CR) of Empathy to Acceptance is 3,349. The P value (Probability) of the relationship between the two is 0.000 ( $P < 0.05$ ). These results indicate that empathy has a positive and significant effect on acceptance. Thus, H3, that empathy positively and significantly impacts policy acceptance, is acceptable.
4. Based on the analysis results by referring to the AMOS output, it is known that the value of the Critical Ratio (CR) of Resilience to Acceptance is 9,248. The P value (Probability) of the relationship between the two is 0.000 ( $P < 0.05$ ). These results indicate that resilience has a positive and significant effect on acceptance. Thus, H4, that there is a positive and significant effect of stability on policy acceptance, is acceptable.
5. Based on the analysis results by referring to the AMOS output, it is known that the Critical Ratio (CR) value of Empathy to Obedience is 3,807. The P value (Probability) of the relationship between the two is 0.000 ( $P < 0.05$ ). These results indicate that empathy has a positive and significant effect on obedience. Thus, H5, that empathy positively and significantly impacts obedience, is acceptable.

6. Based on the analysis results by referring to the AMOS output, it is known that the value of the Critical Ratio (CR) of Resilience to Obedience is 4,073. The P value (Probability) of the relationship between the two is 0.000 ( $P > 0.05$ ). These results indicate that resilience has a positive and significant effect on obedience. Thus, H6, that resilience positively and significantly impacts compliance, is acceptable.

7. Based on the analysis results by referring to the AMOS output, the Sobel Test is carried out to determine whether acceptance plays a mediating role between Empathy and Obedience. Using the Sobel Test formula, the mediation test resulted in a z value (mediation) of 2,989, or  $> 1.96$ , with a significance level of 5%. Thus, H7, that there is a positive and significant effect of empathy on obedience with policy acceptance as a mediator, is acceptable.

8. Based on the analysis results by referring to the AMOS output, the Sobel Test is carried out to determine whether acceptance plays a mediating role between Empathy and Obedience. The mediation test using the Sobel Test formula resulted in a z value (mediation) of 5,300, or  $> 1.96$ , with a significance level of 5%. Thus, H8, that there is a positive and significant effect of resilience on obedience with policy acceptance as a mediator, is acceptable.

These results can also provide answers regarding the government's success in handling the pandemic situation, especially as evidenced by the decrease in the number of cases of Covid-19 sufferers or the acceleration of recovery of national economic conditions. Although there are not a few criticisms addressed to the government regarding the implementation of policies that often change, the delay in responding to the development and mutation of the virus, to the application of regulations in the field, which are often selective and deemed unfair (Christian & Sa'id, 2021). Apart from these criticisms, this study shows the government's efforts to deal with crises. The government pays attention to the psychological situations of the community, especially those directly affected by the policy, such as students who are respondents to this study.

## **Conclusion**

This study indicates that obedience in carrying out all existing rules and policies is an important variable needed for the success of the government and society in dealing with the pandemic. However, obedience is influenced by many factors, in which empathy, resilience, and acceptance studied in this study play a role. Psychological resilience's empathy impacts acceptance of policies and has implications for community obedience in carrying out all government



rules and policies. The effectiveness of the acceptance of government policies by the public, especially from the educated young generation such as students, must be supported by the level of resilience and empathic awareness of the students concerned about the conditions and difficulties of others. This support, in turn, can also result in community obedience as a whole, which makes the government able to handle better the Pandemic situation in Indonesia.

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