

Empowering Children's Learning Motivation during Covid-19 Pandemic in Urban Areas (Case of Bandung City)

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Abstract. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the concern of children's welfare has taken a new dimension around the world including Indonesia. Because the pandemic has both long-term and short-term effects on children's welfare and rights, this study developed and used qualitative research methods to assess measures taken by the parents, teachers, and the larger community to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigate the negative impacts on children. The data were collected using semi-structured interview techniques and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. To explore and obtain a depth of understanding of the information, participants were purposively chosen consisting of all parents and elementary school teachers. The findings of this study indicate that the involvement of parents and elementary school teachers to ensure children are safe and continue to learn as usual during a pandemic is the result of awareness of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children.

Keywords: learning motivation; children's welfare; Covid-19 pandemic; Indonesia

1. Introduction

The year of 2019 to 2020 has been a historical year all over the world since the world has been facing an outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic as it was declared as a world public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (WHO) [18]. People's lifestyles have drastically changed around the world. Almost both medical professionals and normal citizens have confronted similar difficulties such as psychological issues, anxiety, stress, and depression [36]. Although, several measures have been taken from both governments and larger societies to overcome the effects of the pandemic such as social distancing and self-quarantine.

Immediately after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the world has experienced changes in all aspects of life including economic, social, cultural, and educational sectors, leading to school closures. As a result of COVID-19 effects, children have been experiencing several difficulties in learning as well as socialization. However, it is critical to evaluate children's and consider mental

health during the COVID-19 pandemic to limit the risk of behavioral and emotional discomfort. With different countries facing different transmission situations, World Health Organization (WHO) developed general guidance for laboratory diagnosis, advice on the use of masks during home care and in health care settings in the context of COVID-19 outbreak, clinical management, infection prevention, and control in health care settings, home care for patients suspected novel coronavirus, risk communication and community engagement and Global Surveillance for human infection with COVID-19 pandemic, [8]

All health system in the world has already strained as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. Parents, teachers, and the communities, in general, have turned out to support children's welfares. It is from the previous studies that establish the conceptions that the proportions of infection among children seems to be small more than the proportions of infections to adults people from the age of 18 above [28]; [24] though the number of infections to children has gradually increased as the reason that, it has been difficult for children to take some precautionary measures such as wearing a mask, keeping social distances and frequent washing of hands. According to [32], most of the children who have various body problems such as children with chronic chest problems are the ones who are most prone to be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Still, there is no clear data from various literature related to children and adult diseases indicating children who are normal have infections due to the Covid-19 pandemic though all parents in the world have been asked to protect their children in any way.

Children's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic is highly influenced by their families' socioeconomic status and lifestyle. According to several studies, children from low-income families are more likely to become infected with Covi-19 [5] and they are likely to have poor academic performances. Food shortages and other children's demands weaken some immune systems, increasing the risk of Coronavirus infection and causing developmental issues such as psychological, physical, and emotional disorders. [20] has reported that during COVID-19 1 in 7 parents has caused mental health to their children as a result of loss of attachment, food insecurity, and delay of health care. Due to the closure of schools, some parents have failed to incorporate technology into learning in order to provide mental and behavioral health to their children, as was done in schools by teachers.

The situation of Covid-19 in Indonesia

Indonesia is among the most ranked populated country in the world having more than 260 million residences. Indonesia is divided into 34 different provinces, while more than 50 percent of its residents are living in the main Java Islands. The majority of the population in Indonesia is concentrated in large cities and small cities, wherein Jakarta alone is approximated to have more than 10 million people [4]. The recent data indicate that 80 million people in Indonesia are children, covering 30 percent of the whole inhabitants and make Indonesia being the fourth largest child-populated country in the world (UNICEF, 2020b).

Like other areas in the world, Indonesia is among the Asian countries most affected by the Corona Virus pandemic. The Ministry of Health in Indonesia announced the first cases of COVID-19 pandemic in the 2 Match of 2020 while during May 2020, the Government banned all international flights and closure of some institutions including schools. Before, the government did not immediately close institutions and other organizations for fear of economic collapse, but as the number of cases increased, the government imposed a total lockdown on some cities that appeared to be mostly infected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report made by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia and WHO, (2020) shows a wide range of areas and cases of infections and deaths despite measures taken by government and external support involving social distancing, wearing masks, closure of some schools, and others. Following an increase in new cases for the spread of the disease, there has been reported insufficiency of health facilities to accommodate the needs of all patients [27]. Studies show that there are only 309,100 hospital beds in Indonesia with most of them being located in west java while, there are less than 6,000 Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds nationwide, [26].

The government of Indonesia has enacted several interventions to address the further spread of the COVID-19 pandemic to the people and children in particular. The level of stress and anxiety towards people is high. Meanwhile, quarantine to those doubted to be infected and the people around infected person, banns of some domestic and international transportations, banning of public gathering and the closure of schools, restaurants, and public spaces, are among of the interventions being enacted by the government in Indonesia, [26].

COVID-19 pandemic has become the world's most serious problem, disrupting people's lifestyles. Various recent researches have been done in the world based on children's welfares during the COVID-19 pandemic, but few of them has been conducted in Indonesia based on mental empowerments during the COVID-19 pandemic [12]; [1]; [2] [33]. Therefore, this study specifically aims to support children's mental health and explore the measures taken by the parents, teachers, and the larger community to cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic to children and mitigate the negative impacts on children. On top of that, this study aims to investigate the way COVID-19 has affected learning for elementary school children in Indonesia.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are to better identify and define the best strategies to support children's learning motivations during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the following set of questions used to lead the investigation in this study:-

1. What do parents and elementary school teachers do to ensure the safety of children during a pandemic?
2. How COVID-19 pandemic has affected children's learning?
3. What are the strategies employed by both parents and elementary school teachers to ensure continuity of learning to children?
4. How do both parents and elementary school teachers help to restore children's learning motivations during a pandemic?

2. Literature Review

Children's mental health depression associated with COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 pandemic has substantially affected the lives of many people around the world culminating in mental diseases in some families [23].

. Families have been affected as a result of the World Health Organization's (WHO) instructions and common strategies to combat the Covid-19 epidemic, such as lockdown [7], and some children are in danger of maltreatment.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, children are a vulnerable group thought to be at high danger of sexual abuse. Findings have indicated that families' lifestyles have drastically changed during the Covid-19 pandemic, financial problems, emotional hardship are among the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result of financial problems, deaths of some parents, several children have been

found and forced to work as domestic servants, with some of them becoming street beggars to support their families [29], as a result, children are being subjected towards tremendous psychological impact with long-term consequences.

As a result of children's excessive use of social media, there has been an increase in the number of cases of child abuse every day since the Covid-19 pandemic. Many individuals and organizations have expressed their concern that, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media has become a tragedy and a source of sexual assault against children. Children's widespread usage of social media has been reported and suspected of placing them at risk of being abused, either by transmitting pornographic images and videos or through actual sexual abuse (Döring, 2020). Physical isolation has made children come into contact with some predators in the social networks who seek sex from an innocent child [34]. Therefore, Governments, companies, schools, and parents must work in collaboration to ensure that children's online experiences are safe and positive during the Covid-19 crisis.

Continuity of learning to children during Covid-19 pandemic

It is an indisputable fact that studies should continue as usual during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Indonesian government has created new teaching and learning policies that require teachers to perform distance learning in collaboration with parents at home. Several studies have found that online learning is the best and effective way in this pandemic as a mechanical way to stop the further spread of the Covid-19 pandemic [15]. There are several free online platforms that are recommended to support live-video communication for teaching and learning such as Zoom Cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, collaboration, chat and webinars; Google Meet for video calls and conferencing, Video meeting recordings, Screen sharing, join calls using Google Calendar; YouTube lives; Facebook Live and Skype.

Online teaching and learning appear to be efficient and effective, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, however, it has presented a number of challenges for both teachers and children. Online learning necessitates the use of electronic equipment such as computers, smartphones, internet packages, and other devices, which appears to be a barrier in some regions due to some teachers and children's lack of understanding of how to manipulate those electronic gadgets [10]. Furthermore, some children with disabilities, such as hearing and sight problems, have found that online learning is not suitable for them [22].

The psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to children.

The closure of schools as a result of Covid-19 and transition from school to home learning environments has been a source of stress, anxiety, and mental illnesses to children and young people in Indonesia. The Indonesian government has ordered the closure of schools in a number of cities, including Bandung, in order to prevent the further spread of the viruses. Geographical and lifestyle disparities appear to be one of the hurdles to distant learning for some families, affecting some marginalized children who are unable to access learning online. Several findings have found that there are children who have taken on parental responsibilities due to various reasons such as the death of their parents and the poor economic situation ending up unable to join online classes, [35]. Also, there is a number of children have missed online lessons delivered by their teachers due to some parents' lack of teaching abilities and knowledge of how to manipulate online learning facilities.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the Indonesian government and other health authorities have been working hard to raise public awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the government implemented several steps to avoid Covid-19, such as social distancing and wearing

of masks in public, the burden on the economy has risen significantly among Indonesians and people globally. Some families are unable to pay the government-mandated online learning, which causes stress and other mental illnesses to some children and other young people, resulting in lower academic performance and efficiency. [14]. Also, because of differences in geographical location, some children are unable to use and access the internet and benefit from government assistance.

The outbreak of Covid-19 has had a profound impact on the life of people. It has delayed the start of school for children, as well as the opening of colleges and universities, which has resulted in some mental health issues among children and young people already enrolled in these institutions [6]. As reported in some writings, the majority of children and young people who have abruptly stopped attending schools as a result of the pandemic are experiencing a variety of mental and psychological problems, as they have been dragged unwillingly into a new lifestyle of quarantine in which they are expected to stay at home, rather than meeting their lovely friends as they did before the pandemic [21].

Several studies have found that the shift from physical attachment to distance learning has significantly reduced the motivation of children and university students to learn, resulting in decreased effectiveness and efficiency in their studies and, in some cases, dropouts as a result of numerous interruptions during teaching and learning processes, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic [13].

An increasing number of deaths and infected cases as heard from various mass media a result of Covid-19 in Indonesia and other places in the world have been impacting the lives of people as there increase stress and anxiety since the only way to get away from this pandemic is to keep social distancing, wearing masks, self-isolations and other measures[2].

3. Methods

This study was conducted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia specifically in Bandung city. Since corona invaded Indonesia, Bandung city has been plagued by various zones of infections including the red zone in some areas. This study is qualitative research in nature and used descriptive analysis in interpreting data. According to [30] descriptive qualitative research analysis does not intend to manipulate variables, rather it describes the variables. The reason for using this method was to explore and gain a deeper understanding, opinions, perspectives, and attitudes of the individual participants basing on the measures taken to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigate the negative impacts on children.

Parents and elementary school teachers in Bandung served as sources of data and informants in this study. 30 participants were purposively selected, based on their willingness to share their knowledge and experiences [3]. Semi-structured interviews were employed as the data collection techniques. Following all rules and regulations to protect against the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews and direct conversations via telephone were carried out during data collection.

The thematic analysis also was used in this study. Thematic analysis refers to a flexible method of identifying patterns or themes in qualitative data to address certain issues [9]. In this study, every response considered to be important for the study was collected and highlighted. Therefore, themes were developed from the various data provided by the informants. This involved organization and identifications of ideas and assumptions from the data collected.

4. Results

In this part, different themes were developed basing on the information provided by the respondents in this study.

Children's Awareness of COVID-19 pandemic

Various groups and levels of participants were attended and interviewed in this study based on their awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic and how they help children to understand and cope with the challenges of the pandemic. 30 participants were interviewed including parents and teachers. The answers given from the questions asked based on children's awareness of COVID-19 relied on different perceptions and understanding of COVID-19.

“Currently, the awareness of children about the Corona Virus is higher than in the past. We have been using various methods to educate children about infection and how to protect ourselves as we are advised by our government such as wearing a mask in groups, keeping social distancing, and frequently washing their hands with clean water or sanitizers. We are implementing these through letting them watch a cartoon that provides education on infection in television, the use games during and even before eating”.

Some of the teachers explained that, since the pandemic has entered it has taken them a long time to adopt the situations. After the government introduced an online teaching system, teachers have been struggling to find the best ways to make their children understand the pandemic and cope with the available situation of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

“Through WhatsApp and Zoom meeting, we have been working closely with parents to ensure the safety of children and also to ensure that children continue to receive education even during the corona epidemic”.

Although children seem to be aware of corona infections, they are still unable to take precautionary measures by themselves unless they have very close supervision from their adults. Therefore, still, efforts are needed from both parents and the larger community to ensure children are well protected from the Corona Viruses.

Parenting and children's play and learning during COVID-19 pandemic

During the Covid-19 pandemic, parents have multiple roles towards their children's development including educating, assessing, and evaluating the progress of their children [25]. The majority of parents are supporting their children to learn and play during the COVID-19 pandemic. The information provided shows that, apart from the various challenges that parents are facing in teaching and learning, but they have been taking deliberate efforts in collaboration with teachers during the pandemic in ensuring that their children continue to receive education as usual.

“It is important to know that all children are seeking guidance from their parents to cope with the changes and stressful events of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been making sure that children continue to receive education even in this COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers have created WhatsApp groups that we use to provide all the information regarding children's progress and things to do. Teachers have been working very closely with us giving some techniques of teaching our children and conducting general assessments and evaluation together with teachers via WhatsApp groups and Zoom meetings”

During COVID-19 pandemic has been a most essential time for parents to be close to their children than ever. Stress, anxiety, and mental illness have been projected to occur if parents lower their affection with children, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents have been

guiding their children on the appropriate and preventive measures of the pandemic, giving them confidence and reducing anxiety in order to reduce the risk of illness.

“If parents have stress then even children will have it too. What we are trying to do, is to make sure we parents ourselves refrain from expressing our feelings about the Corona Virus infection in order to keep our children calm. And sometimes we have been very close with children playing various games such as playing computer games and phone games, but also even watching cartoons together with children to make them feel as if they are at school”.

The results of interviews with parents reveal that, despite the closure of schools, but their responsiveness and empathy towards their children’s development are significantly perceived and their deliberate efforts to overcome some of the negative effects that are likely to be caused by the COVID-19 pandemic such as anxiety and mental illness.

Talking to children during the pandemic

Parents and other caregivers are responsible for the questions and concerns raised by their children during the pandemic and they should respond to them appropriately. The results of the interview with parents show that most parents admitted to working closely with their children at home even though they seemed to have many other responsibilities. When asked if they are speaking with children to understand about COVID-19, parents answered that they are trying to keep their children occupied with the task that they mostly like and make them understand the rules of frequent washing their hands, keeping social distancing and try to make them fun at home.

“We start talking to our children first by acknowledging that it is ok for these pandemics to occur in life and we try to speak to them with plain and clear language, based on the information that our government has provided to us while insisting them to steer away from fake news in social Medias”

COVID- 19 pandemic news is everywhere. Parents have been struggling to help their children balance consuming news regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents have reported that children have been very quick to find information related to coronavirus infection through various networks, but as parents we have been helping them balance the information they receive, telling them how does fake news works and spread.

Keeping children positive during the pandemic

Positive parenting could be the way to promote mental health, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis. Parents’ perceptions of children’s safety during pandemics rely on creating a suitable environment at home for children to continue learning and explore. Health environment for children aids in the promotion of mental wellness and the reduction of anxiety. Therefore, parents are attempting to reassure their children that they are watching out for them.

“We know that children are going through a very difficult time of loneliness and isolation from their peers during this pandemic, but we are trying to convince them that everything is fine while keeping the home environment safe for them to continue learning and playing.

5. Discussion

The findings indicate that both children, parents, teachers, and the entire society have been significantly affected by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents are worried about the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their children’s development. It became apparent for parents and other caregivers to take a full-time role in their children’s development and learning

during the COVID-19 pandemic [19]. The study has revealed some challenges that parents are facing when taking care of their children during the pandemic, the majority stated that they do not have sufficient knowledge to connect their children to online learning, though they are doing their best efforts in partnership with teachers to ensure that children acquire skills and knowledge required.

Since learning is conducted remotely during the pandemic, teachers have reported that virtual learning seems to be a problem for many parents as some of them are unable to afford the cost of internet data and some of them lack digital skills to manipulate gadgets, at the end hinder learning activities to children. Another problem encountered by the teachers during a pandemic is assessment and evaluations of children's development online [31]. It has been noted that not all parents understand how to deal with children's concerns and implement learning at home as most of them seem to be shouting at children and getting angry with their children.

Both parents and teachers in this study have admitted that learning at home has changed the mood of the children to learn. Not all parents understand how to handle children's behaviors and emotions. The results of the study indicate that some parents feel angry and fail to communicate smoothly with their children simply because they have other responsibilities and they lack the skills to deal with children as teachers do. This situation obviously will affect the learning process of children. Therefore, to achieve the mental health of the children, parents need to maintain a mutual parent-child relationship to secure positive developmental outcomes for the children during a pandemic.

Keeping children positive has been the main task for most parents and other caregivers during a pandemic. Parents reported that, when children are given positive instructions on what to do, they are likely to stay calm and focused during a pandemic. Developmental outcomes of the children depend much on the positive attachment from the parents or caregivers [16]. Parents reported that, when we are positive to children, it increases the level of interconnectedness and mental health. The way for children to get happy is through playing and make them forget about the negative thoughts. We use play as the way for them to express their feelings and sometimes we connect with their friends online to talk and forget about the pandemic moment.

6. Conclusion

In general, since the pandemic is still hitting the country, there are different ways parents, teachers, and the large community can do to help young children of different ages to understand and cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is true that children are aware of the existence of the Covid-19 pandemic either through social networks or through other people around them. Parents and teachers have a big role to help their children to understand well the circumstances by being sincerely truthful to them explaining politely and confidently about the pandemic in order to reduce some mental effects that might happen to them as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is true that the economic standing and lifestyles of people have completely changed around the world. Prominent scientists and psychologists have stated that the effects of the pandemic will take years to return to normal. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every member of the society to ensure that this pandemic is brought to an end by following all of the precautions that their governments and the World Health Organization (WHO) have previously advised in order to limit the number of deaths and infections around the world.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the government need to frame and restructure the curriculum to help teachers to adopt the changing situations of the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, teachers and parents must collaborate closely to ensure that they continue to assist children in learning even during the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the pandemic is still affecting numerous towns in Indonesia, parents, teachers, children, and entire communities must ensure that they follow all official protocols in order to prevent the viruses from spreading further throughout the country.

Games, storytelling should be one of the best ways for parents to calm their children in the situations of Covid-19. As we all know that children and young people have loaded with a lot of information from different sources including television and social media including information about deaths and infected people with Virus something that sometimes confuse them and become stressed. Therefore, parents should use figurative plays in explaining the realities of the pandemic like the use of pictures, drawings that show the reality of the pandemic hence they cope with the present situations.

Usually, children use to react the same way as they see their parents, therefore, parents themselves should be very careful in controlling their emotions before they control their children's emotions. Parents and caregivers are responsible for frequently speak to and encourage their children to calm down, let them know that it is normal for sometimes to become upset, and answer politely some questions being raised by their children regarding the issues of Pandemic.

Playing with children will improve their ability to regulate their emotions. Parents need to help their children to recognize their feelings by helping them to express themselves through different ways like painting, arts, and crafts. Attachments of father and mother are very important in this time of Covid-19 as it will help them to reduce some stress and anxiety to children. Studies show that children whose fathers were more involved in parenting demonstrate better social adaptability and mental health.

During this challenging time, parents should give their children more attention. Encourage children to participate by creating opportunities for them to share household chores as much as they can and involve them in family discussions and decisions. Children can discuss with family members daily routines and house rules, plan their own activities, and manage their time spent at home. In this way, children will have a sense of control, which will help them overcome the feeling of uncertainty. This is also an opportunity for them to learn time management and improve planning skills.

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