

Exploration of Teenager Problem in Islamic Boarding School After COVID-19 Pandemic

Siti Mahmudah, Fuji Astutik, and Elok Faiz Fatma El Fahmi

*Faculty of Psychology, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Malang, Indonesia
mahmudah@psi.uin-malang.ac.id, fujiastutik@uin-malang.ac.id, elokfaiz@uin-malang.ac.id*

Keywords: Pandemic, Teenager Problem, Student, Pandemic

Abstract: Pandemic of COVID-19 in Indonesia has impacted a lot of aspects of life including Islamic boarding schools. Students were usually living and doing activities together starting from a process of learning, free hours, until sleep time. Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has required a social distancing policy that was aimed to minimize transmission, the students must be returned to their homes for a long time. This policy was valid until a decision that they were allowed to be back at the boarding school was issued. The return of students would definitely need a new adaptation for both male and female students. The problem of teenagers was usually related to their relationship with peers. But, the different conditions of post-pandemic COVID-19 might allow for a different kind of problem. The aim of this research was to explore student problems after the pandemic of COVID-19. This research type was a qualitative study which exerted a phenomenological approach. The research subjects were about 40 male and female students who were selected based on a purposive sampling technique. The criterion of sampling was the student who encountered problems during the process of learning either in formal or informal education. The result of the data analysis referred to a different theme of problems between male and female students. In the male students, the problem which commonly appeared was not only related to the relationship with peers but also adaptation to daily activities. For instance, students had difficulty managing between sleep time and study hours, therefore the male students admitted that they often felt out of focus and sleepy in class. Meanwhile, female students found difficulties in understanding and accepting their peers and conflict among peers for making new friends or misunderstandings among friends.

1 INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2019, a plague initially appeared and originated from China and it has spread to the entire world including Indonesia. This plague is known as coronavirus or COVID-19. The emergence of this outbreak has changed the pattern of human life. For example, social distancing and reduction of direct contact which were aimed to minimize disease transmission. The condition of social distancing is a new problem in an Islamic boarding school because students in the boarding school live together and it seems impossible for them to comply with social distancing policy. Hence, the solution taken for this situation is to return the students to their homes. However, to solve this virus problem like procurement of vaccines and its distribution needs time, so the students are at home for a long time, particularly more than six months. The return of

students will definitely need a new adaptation for both male and female students. The students who live in a boarding school are generally in the phase of adolescent growth. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the category of teenager is referred to as a stage of growth between childhood and adulthood, ranging from 10-19 years old. The adolescent stage is divided into several stages, including the pre-adolescent phase at the age of 11 or 12 years to 13 or 14 years. In this developmental phase, it is said as a negative phase, since teenagers in this phase tend to behave and act negatively. The teenagers in this phase find it difficult to communicate with their parents. The increase in reflectiveness about themselves has begun to appear. Thus, some questions might appear, "am I cool?", "do I look good?", or "What do other people think about me?". Next, it is a phase of early adolescent growth which ranges from the age of 13 or 14 until 17 years. In this phase, an

emotional imbalance and instability might occur in a lot of aspects. A search for self-identity appeared because the achievement of independence and identity were very prominent. The following phase is an advanced adolescence at the age of 17-21 years with characteristics of the expectation to stand out and be the center of attention (Mc Devitt & Omrod, 2002).

Every adolescent phase should be passed properly since if someone fails to perform the growth phase at a particular age, it will affect the following growth phase. To complete the task of growth, teenagers are not separated from an interaction between themselves and the surrounding environment either with friends or parents. When going through those transition phases, teenagers are faced with self-control problems. A few problems that should be alerted within daily life appear such as late sleep behavior, laziness, lesson neglect, like to argue, defiant behavior towards teachers and parents, etc.

In addition to the adolescent problem, teenagers have a strong need to establish relationships with peers. The acceptance from peer groups is an important thing for those teenagers. Meanwhile, the teenagers in boarding school must interact with each other for 24 hours a day. So, when teenagers find problems with peers or have a lack of acceptance, it will bring a problem for them. When teenagers are at home, interaction is built between themselves and their parents and a little possibility with friends around their home. The transition between staying at home for a long time and being back to the activities in boarding school might bring a problem in their adaptation. As it is referred from the interview result with one of the students who said that after returning to the boarding school, the student must readapt with rules in the boarding school and meet with friends after a long time. A previous research by Boldero & Fallon (1995) has found that most problems for teenagers are related to family, interpersonal relationships, education, and health problems. In this research, the researcher did not differ between male and female gender. Another previous research done by Raju & Rahamtulla (2007) has referred to a significant difference in boys and their level of emotional adjustment and no significant difference in school, social adaptation, and education. The research has been completed by the other research by Rajeswari & Eljo (2013) which has stated that either male or female teenager has problems, but the problem might differ due to their gender and level. The boys usually have problems relating to economic independence, and information of the

opposite sex, while girls have problems with how they can look good, healthy, and unfulfilled desire. Those problems will hamper the positive growth and development of both male and female teenagers.

The gender difference was done by Landazabal (2009) concerning empathy between male and female teenagers. In this preliminary research, based on about 313 participants ranging from 10-14 years old, the female teenagers have shown a higher significant score on assertive and pro-social behavior, cognitive analysis, and empathy for negative emotions. Whereas, male students have a tendency of the higher aggressive behavior than female teenagers do within their interaction with peers. The research result showed that according to gender, both male and female teenagers behave and deal with problems differently. It is not only based on gender, environment and a new situation will also affect teenager problems. Therefore, based on the previous research and phenomena of post-pandemic COVID-19, the researchers aim to explore the problems of students who are in the adolescent phase. If the problem can be soon identified, it will be easier to find a solution in order to solve the problems of teenagers. As mentioned and explained above, when someone cannot pass a certain developmental phase, he will find difficulty in the following phase. In this recent research, the researchers limit the exploration of the problem, not to the problem-solving.

2 METHOD

This research was qualitative research that used a phenomenological approach. According to Creswell (2015), the phenomenological approach was used to develop an understanding or define the meaning of a phenomenon experienced by an individual or group. These research subjects were about 40 students who were 20 male students and 20 female students. The determination of research subjects was based on a purposive sampling technique. Moleong (2012) has stated that purposive sampling was a technique of data sampling by a group of the subject population who has a similarity of characteristics with the research population. The criterion of data sampling in this research was the student who has problems in the process of learning. In both formal and informal education, the problem might occur in the formal school or extra activities in the boarding school like extracurriculars. The method of data collection was through a semi-structured type of interview with each subject of research.

3 RESULTS

Based on the result of the interview and data analysis on about 40 participants of the research, the researchers have found two general themes. Those two themes were based on gender, male and female.

Theme I: Adaptation to do daily activities

A problem that appeared was related to daily activities in the boarding school. The problem was shown by male students. The daily problem here referred to the situation in which the students found it difficult to wake up on time as the predetermined schedule.

“It was hard when I woke up at dawn, felt like sleeping all over again because I slept late chatting with friends until midnight.”

In addition to the difficulty of waking up according to the schedule, they have admitted that they overslept during *wirid* after shubuh prayer and during study time. Due to that sleepiness, they could not stand to avoid sleeping during the activities after prayer time and study time. As a consequence, they got punished and could not study well.

“After finishing the prayer, I fell asleep, as well as in the class, I fell asleep again when the teacher was explaining a material, so I was punished by the teacher since I did not understand about the lesson well.”

Another problem relating to this theme was frequent lateness because the student was not able to split and manage time between study time and rest time. The activities in the boarding school were a lot, so the students often found difficulty in following every activity based on the schedule.

“There were a lot of activities at the boarding school, so it was difficult to manage time. Sometimes I was late going to school because of a long queue at the bathroom and dining area.”

Theme II: Relationship with peers

Problems with peers are generally experienced by female students. For example, a misunderstanding among female students, since it was difficult for them to understand their friends. Moreover, they lack self-confidence because they do not feel as beautiful as other friends.

“It was like when someone expected to be understood, but she chose to stay away and did not want to be friends with me.”

“I am not confident because my friend told me that I am not beautiful, yeah I am ugly instead, not beautiful as other friends of mine, so I lose my confidence to make friends and play with them.”

The problem might appear because of making new friends and not sharing the same room with them previously. Further, it was about another problem with seniors or older students, so they felt bad and uncomfortable.

“It was like having a new friend who used to be in a different room with me for the same student batch, I often felt bad and uncomfortable with seniors when I was doing anything, and when I thought about it, I was thinking about going home.”

The other problem might also occur when a friend suddenly has a different group of friends. Moreover, the problem is that a friend lost their stuff, but she did not even apologize.

“It is like grouping, suddenly ignored, my friend went with the other friends, it made me sad and crying alone.”

“There was a friend, who lost my notebook, but she did not even apologize or feel guilty, this was annoying and unpleasant. She said that I was arrogant and she did not want to be friends with me any longer.”

In male teenagers, the problem of relationships with peers might occur because they were mocking each other. So, one of them was upset by the mockery. In addition to the mockery, another annoying behavior was a friend who hides other's stuff, so it came to a fight.

“My friend was nosy, he was mocking at me, so I was mad and fought him.”

“My friend hid my sandals, I was confused and mad at him at the same time, and invited him to fight.”

4 DISCUSSION

This research result found a difference between problems for male students and female students after the pandemic time. The return of students from home after the social distancing policy during the process of vaccine procurement has required the students to have a new adaptation after a long time of having activities at their own homes. *Santri* was a name or term for those who studied Islam. Meanwhile, the place where *santri* or students learned Islam was called a boarding school (*pondok pesantren*) (Dhofier, 1983). The term of *santri* which was accidentally at the phase of adolescent growth with their own characteristics and psychological needs was faced with a variety of problems in the boarding school, having different problems between male and female students. This

difference has brought two themes as the result of the exploration of student problems. This result was in line with the research finding by Rajeswari & Eljo (2013) that the difference in problem was found between boys and girls.

The first theme was related to the student adaptation to routine activities like school activity, worship activity, and obedience and compliance with the predetermined schedule. On the male students, they found it difficult to wake up according to the school schedule. They could not also refrain from falling asleep during activities at the boarding school or during formal school. This finding was in line with the adolescent problem stated by Masgood (1998) that teenagers tend to sleep late, act lazy, and neglect lessons in class.

The second theme was related to the student's relationship with peers. The peer was an important thing for teenagers. Especially the activities at a boarding school which definitely required them to live together for 24 hours which might bring problems. The problem was not only related to the daily activities of students but the problem was also related to a fight with peers. Even though the majority of problems were related to daily activities, the problem with peers was also found in male students. It was in line with the research by Landazabal (2009) which has found that boys might show a tendency for higher aggressive behavior than girls within their interaction with peers.

The female students tended not to complain about their daily activities. The girls' problem was more likely related to their relationship with peers. The different problems felt by female students concerning their relationship with peers. If the problem of male students was more likely related to a quarrel or fight between each other, the problem of female students was more varied. For instance, female students have the problem of a lack of self-confidence in appearance and physical condition. This finding was in line with the previous research by Rajeswari & Eljo (2013) which asserted that male students have problems relating to economic independence and information of the opposite sex, while female students have problems relating to how they look better and more beautiful. The attraction for girls was particularly related to physical appearance and how they were accepted and acknowledged by their social environment. For example, in this recent research finding, the female students expected to be socially accepted and appreciated by their friends, this situation was an important thing for them. Then, when they did not get attention from others, it would be a problem for

them. Peer friendship was an important thing for teenagers since they were able to share stories, same interests, information, or secrets. Six functions within a friendship: as a friend, booster, physical support, affection, ego support, and social comparison (Santrock, 2002). Although the female students had some problems but they did not fight, this situation was different from the male students. This recent research finding was in line with preliminary research done by Raju & Rahamtulla (2007) that has found a significant difference in boys and their level of emotional adjustment, while no significant difference was found in school, social adaptation, and education. The social adjustment was related to how the teenagers could manage and respond to any problem that appeared. This aspect was not separated from empathy; the lack of empathy was related to the high level of aggressiveness (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). Furthermore, the empathy of girls was different from boys. The girls were more empathetic than the boys (Nurdin & Fakhri, 2017).

5 CONCLUSIONS

The result of the data analysis referred to a different theme of problems between boys and girls. For the male students, the problems were not only related to peers but also their adaptation to daily activities. For instance, they have difficulty managing between sleep time and study hours, thus, they often lose focus and fall asleep in class. On the other hand, the problems that appeared in female students were more likely related to their social relationships. The female students, the difficult to understand their friends and conflict among peers because one of them might make a new friend or misunderstanding among peers. Also, the female students have problems of feeling less attractive and less confident. The unique thing from this recent finding was that the problem with peers in male students ended with a fight, but the fight was not found in female students.

6 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This research used *santri* or students as the research subjects, therefore, the result of the research could not be generalized to students in general. In as much as the difference in the learning system between the students who lived at the boarding school and

regular students who went home every day after school might affect the occurrence of the problem. This research was limited to the students of Junior High School who naturally have different tasks from the students of Senior High School. The problems in this research were still general, therefore, the next researchers should restrict a problem or variable of research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks are given to all research subjects who have taken their time to help finish this research.

REFERENCES

- Boldero, J., & Fallon, B. (1995). Adolescent help-seeking: What do they get help for and from whom?. *Journal of adolescence, 18*(2), 193-209.
- Creswell, John W. (2015). *Penelitian Kualitatif & Desain Riset*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Dhofier, Z. (1983). *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai*. Jakarta: LP3S.
- Jolliffe, D., & Farrington, D. P. (2006). Development and validation of the Basic Empathy Scale. *Journal of adolescence, 29*(4), 589-611.
- Landazabal, M. G. (2009). A comparative analysis of empathy in childhood and adolescence: Gender differences and associated socio-emotional variables. *International Journal of Psychology and psychological therapy, 9*(2), 217-235.
- Masqood, R. W. (1998). *Mengantar Remaja Ke Syurga*. Bandung: Penerbit Mizan.
- Mc Devitt, T. M., & Omrod, J. E. (2002). *Child Development and Education*, Colombos Ohio, Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Moleong, L. J. (2012). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Nurdin, M. N., & Fakhri, N. (2017). Perbedaan empati kognitif dan empati afektif pada remaja laki-laki dan perempuan. *Jurnal Psikologi TALENTA, 2*(2), 11.
- Rajeswari, S., & Eljo, J. J. G. (2013). A Comparative Study on The Problems of Adolescent Boys and Girls Students. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IJHSS), 2*, 31-40.
- Raju, M. V. R., & Rahamtulla, T. K. (2007). Adjustment problems among school students. *Journal of the Indian academy of applied psychology, 33*(1), 73-79.
- Santrock, J. W. (2002). *Life Spain Development, Perkembangan Masa Hidup*. Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga.