

CHILDREN EXPERIENCE IN SCHOOL LIFE AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH WELLBEING

Farah Aulia

Universitas Gadjah Mada, Faculty of Psychology
Padang State University, Faculty of Education

bundarafa1801@gmail.com

Abstract

School has a great influence on the development of children, because children spend most of their time in school. As the children endure various experiences during the school, those experiences may bring both positive and negative emotions. Positive emotions is associated with the children wellbeing that can affect a child's ability to participate and be bound by the school. This experience will have a vital role in the lives of children and determine their future in association with the academic, social, and also work sphere. This study aimed to describe the children experiences during the school day, school-related feelings and experiences related to bullying. Data were collected through a survey on 258 primary school children in grades 4 and 5 in Yogyakarta. Data analysis with qualitative descriptive showed that children experience positive and negative emotions associated with the school due to some external factors items, namely relations with peers in school, learning activities in schools, bullying, school rules, teachers and academic achievement. The results of this study have implications for the school to create a more positive school climate that will support positive experiences of children and support the wellbeing of children.

Keyword: experiences, positive, negative, emotions, school, wellbeing.

Author's Biography:



Farah Aulia was born in Padang, West Sumatera, Indonesia. She graduated from the Faculty and Master program of Professional Psychology in the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta. She is a lecturer in Padang State University since 2008. Recently, she completed Doctoral studies at the Faculty of Psychology Universitas Gadjah Mada with a major interest in Educational Psychology.

BACKGROUND

School is the social context that plays important role in child development. Some studies has shown that the school environment is an important factor that explains the behaviors of the students. McLaughlin claimed that the school has a vital role for the development of children [9]. There are several aspects of the school that is important is that the school has a good academic record and attentive, teachers who care, schools that have a broad concept of achievement is not only cognitive but also another field such as music or sports achievement, and schools to make students capable of responsibly and build a good relationship. In this case the teacher has a potential role as a powerful agent in the lives of children. Research conducted by Murray and Greenberg [10] and Barth et al [2] suggested

that the relationship and the experience gained by the students in the school have an influence on its development, psychological wellbeing (subjective wellbeing), self-esteem and social adjustment. In addition, the opportunity to experience a stable relationship, responsibility, motivation, and positive feeling safe at school can be a strong influence on the mental health of students. In addition, research conducted by Sarkova et al., also found that a better relationship between students and peers as well as students and teachers were significantly associated with rates of depression and anxiety and lower social dysfunction [11].

A number of theories are used to discuss how the school context influences the functions of child development. One theory used is the attachment theory proposed by Ainsworth as a basis for understanding the patterns of relationships between children and teachers in schools. Based on this theory a warm and supportive relationship is characterized by open communication, trust, engagement and responsiveness affect social and emotional development through internalization model of accessibility and support. This model provides security for children and explores the situation and also improves the emotional development of children by providing social support system that is safe and consistent for children (Bretherto & MunHolland, 1999).

Children experience at school can be assumed to have an effect on the learning process and their life in the future [1]. Research conducted by Reschly et al. showed that positive emotions are often felt during the school children associated with higher engagement with learning and other negative emotions associated with low attachment. Positive emotions associated with adaptive coping. According to Fredrickson (2001), positive emotions are an indicator or a sign of wellbeing and also formed wellbeing in the future. Negative emotions are often felt it would make the thoughts and behaviors become shallow, reducing a source of learning and adaptation.

Not only the physical school environment that play a role, but adults and peers at school have an important influence on students. In this case, the teachers are the most frequent adults who have direct interaction with the students at school. The relationship that develops between the children and their teachers had a direct influence on the behavior and motivation of students (Wentzel, 1998; Resnick et al., 1997) and has a lasting effect after the child leaves the school environment. Supportive relationship felt by children, feeling safe and connected with schools can provide the environment and social support for children to grow and prosper. Vice versa when the child does not feel bound by the school or feel alienated then he would have a risk of developing antisocial behavior and poor academic adjustment [10].

In addition to the interaction with the teacher, the experience of interacting with peers in school plays a role in social emotional development of students. Qualitative research conducted by Kostenius & Ohrling [7] reported that according to the health and wellbeing of school children is an experience relationships with others and relationship with himself. According to school children, a good relationship has a positive effect on their wellbeing. Connecting with others to make the child feel better when involved in relationships characterized by togetherness, love and support and that cause positive health experience. Togetherness is perceived as an important thing for the wellbeing of children as well as a good relationship described by the children as having someone they feel close to and obtain support, welcome and care. This relationship supports the positive health behaviors. Hartup suggested that friendships provide cognitive and social assistance for every person in its development [4].

The experience that students associated with relationships with peers at school is not always in a positive form. Frequently, students also experience the unpleasant incident as

bullying or victimization. Research conducted by Wolke et al. found out that victims of victimization had a greater risk of having a psychotic disorder at the age of 18 years [14]. In addition, students who are exposed to high levels of violence in schools are also significantly experiencing clinical levels of trauma symptoms than students who are vulnerable to low-level violence (Flannery et al., 2004). Flashpohler found that students who experience bullying or who become bullies will experience a decline in life satisfaction and support from peers than children who have never done experiencing bullying or bullying [3]. In addition, this study also found that peers and teachers will be able to play a role in mitigating the impact of bullying on the victim's quality of life.

Based on the above, this article aims to explain the experience of students in the school associated with feelings about the school, the factors that make students feel happy or not happy at school, and experience related to bullying. This explanation is expected to have implications for the creation of a school climate that makes the child can experience and learning process in schools with a comfortable and supportive development.

METHODS

Participants

Participants in this study were 258 elementary school students in grades 4 and 5 in the city of Yogyakarta, which consisted of 133 students and 125 students with an average age of 9.83 years. The subjects were given a questionnaire consisting of open questions: a) how they feel at school? b) what makes them feel happy or not happy at school? c) is school fun for them? d) What kind of teachers they like? e) A questionnaire on whether they ever perform bullying or being bullied at school. Open questionnaire were analyzed with descriptive qualitative method to find themes that appear related to the questions given.

RESULT

Feelings associated with school

Tab.1. Feelings about school

Positive emotions	Frequency	Negative Emotions	Frequency
Happy	191	Agitated	1
Comfortable	12	Sad	20
Glad	16	Angry	7
Enthusiastic	4	Bored	3
Calm	1	Unhappy	15
Cheerful	1	Insecure	1
Exciting	2	Sick	1
Good	1	Confused	1
Funny	1		
Enjoy	1		
Total			

Relation to what is perceived by the participants on the school there are a number of positive and negative emotions that arise. Based on the percentage of the emotion shown, positive emotions appear amounted to 83.56% and 16.44% negative emotions. Positive emotions include happy, comfortable, happy, happy, excited, calm, cheerful, and well. Instead a number of negative feelings is also demonstrated through the answers given them are anxious, sad, angry, bored, unhappy, insecure, confused and uneasy.

Thing that makes the children happy at school

Tab. 2. Things that make the children happy at school

Answers	Frequency	Total
Learning	40	74
Summarize the lessons	1	
Doing task	2	
Join many activities in school	3	
Rote learning	2	
Lessons fun	9	
Extracurricular activities	12	
No homework	1	
Long rest time period	6	
Have many friend at school	22	125
Nice and funny friends	42	
Entertaining friends	14	
Activities with friends at school (playing, discussing, working, joking)	50	
Promote to next grade	2	5
Good mark	3	
Friendly and cheerful teachers	2	23
Good teacher	17	
Teachers attention and like to praise student	3	
Not grumpy teacher	1	
Comfortable and spacious school	10	21
Library	6	
Toys at school	3	
Food at school	2	
Total		248

Based on the responses of the participants there are some emerging themes associated with things that make happy to be in school, that learning activities, relationships with peers, academic achievement, teachers and school facilities. In this case the relationship with peers in school to be a theme that appears most (50.4%), then the learning activities (29.8%), teachers (9.2%) and facilities (8.5%). Subjects in this research seemed to enjoy the learning activities in schools such as summarizing lessons, tasks, rote, rarely homework and fun learning situations. Associated with peers, it makes the subject feel happy to be in school are there a lot of friends in school, have the support of friends, and activities undertaken by a

friend at school to play games, chat, collaboration, discussion, roads and joking . The relationship with teachers is also a factor that makes the subjects feel happy at school. The fun teachers perceived by the subjects as teachers who are friendly, cheerful, attentive, praising and not grumpy.

Things that make children unhappy at school

Tab. 3. Things that makes the children unhappy at school

Answers	Frequency	Total
Being bullied at school (teased, kicked, be insulted, threatened)	96	96
Too many tasks	14	40
Confusing learning	6	
Difficult lessons	9	
Unpleasant subjects	5	
Learning time is too long	3	
Additional lessons	2	
Rest time is too short	1	
School rules too strict	14	16
Inconsistent school rules	2	
School is dirty	7	11
Incapacious school	1	
Unhealthy food	3	
Hot temperature	1	
Noisy	3	
Bad achievement	6	7
No challenges	1	
No close friend	2	32
Fight with friend	18	
Have a gank	1	
See friends fighting	6	
Indifferent friends	5	
Cheating teacher	2	10
Grumpy teacher	4	
Bad teacher	2	
Boring teacher	2	
Total		212

A number of emerging themes related to question things that make them are not happy at school is bullying at school, the stress associated with school work, relationships with peers, relationships with teachers, school facilities, school rules and learning achievement. The pressure associated with them in the form of school work schoolwork many, confusing and boring lessons, lessons that are difficult and less enjoyable, learning time in school longer

and shorter rest periods. In terms of relationships with teachers, participants in this study assume that the teacher is the factor that makes them do not enjoy being at school. Some behaviors of teachers who make students feel happy that the teacher angry, annoying, unfair, boring and not concerned with the students. School facilities are also a thing that makes the negative emotions of students appear. The reason is related to school dirty, cramped, less neat, hot, and noisy, toilets were dirty and the food in the school that is not healthy.

Bullying and bullied

Bullying in schools is a theme that appears most related to things that are not favored by the participants (38.9%). Though the form of bullying experienced by subjects in this study are ridiculed, kicked, insulted, threatened and maligned. In line with the answers in this section, the results of questionnaire analysis associated with being a perpetrator or a victim of bullying at school show the results as follows:

Tab. 4 Percentage of Students Experiencing Bullying at school

Bullying behavior	Percents
Abused by a friend (e.g., kicked, beaten, pinched, tweaked, slapped, and others)	62,8
Personal items (such as pencils, money, books, and others) taken by another friend without permission)	56,2
Called by friends as a particular name or nickname (e.g., fat guy, curly and other nicknames)	52
Threatened / intimidated	42,2
Ridiculed / insulted friend	60,1

Based on the above table it can be concluded that students who become participants in this study had experienced bullying in the form of physical or verbal with a considerable percentage. Got a rough physical treatment of a friend like being kicked, beaten, pinched and other abusive behavior of a percentage of the greatest, followed by personal items taken without permission, and verbal bullying such as dialed by a particular nickname, ridiculed or threatened.

Tab. 5. Percentage of students doing the bullying

Bullying behavior	Percent
Physical violence on friends (e.g., kicking, hitting, pinching, tweak, slapping and other)	35,6
Taking goods (such as pencils, money, books, etc.) belonging to another friend without permission	18,2
Calling a friend as a particular name or nickname (e.g., fat guy, curly, and other nicknames)	29,4
Threatening / Scare friend	22,1
Taunting / insulting friend	31,3

On the other hand, of the 248 subjects in this study had also been doing the bullying against another friend in the form of physical or verbal. Bullying behavior that most people do is physically and verbally bullying.

Pleasant and unpleasant teacher

As described previously, the teacher becomes one of the things that make students feel happy or not happy to be the school. In general, the things that makes the students are not happy with the teacher associated with the personality of the teacher and how teachers in teaching and treating students. Teachers are angry, grumpy and rude to be the answer that appears most of the students. Furthermore, the way teachers teach boring and unfair to treat students as well be the thing that makes students feel unhappy.

On the contrary, the students liked the teacher whose caring, it is easy to chat with, likes to tell the story, it is not easily angered, explaining the subject matter easily understood, playful, friendly and compassionate, provides an opportunity for students to ask. These characteristics describe the pedagogical competence of teachers in dealing with student.

DISCUSSION

This study describes a number of issues related to how students experience life at school. The findings show that most students feel the positive emotions associated with the school. Positive emotions about the school is considered to be important to make students can engage (engage) with a variety of activities conducted every day at school. The things that bring positive feelings or emotions experienced by students in the schools' relationships with peers, learning activities, relationships with teachers and school facilities. The involvement of children is important for learning and vice versa experience of insecurity (insecurity) is negative affect students' involvement in the task, performance tests and achievement in school. Teachers in general seem to be able to provide a sense of security that is required of students in the school [8].

The results of this study are consistent with the model proposed by school wellbeing carried out by Konu et al. [6] in which there are a number of aspects in the lives of students in schools that can affect the wellbeing of students. Wellbeing is explained not only associated with positive and negative emotions, but also regarding the evaluation of students against what is perceived in everyday school life. The model proposed by Konu et al. divides wellbeing in schools in four parts: a) the condition of the school (school conditions), b) social relationships (school relationship), c) the means to self-fulfillment (means for self-fulfillment) and d) health status [6]. In the category of school conditions, consisting of environmental aspects and around the school, school and school organization, schedule and size of the group, a penalty and a sense of security, health care, school meals Meaning for the fulfillment of the self-described as the possibility of every student to study according to resources and capabilities. Seen through the health status disorder symptoms felt by the students. Social relationship category contains aspects of school climate, group dynamics, the relationship between teachers and students, relationships with peers, bullying, cooperation with parents and school management. Meaning of self-fulfillment aspect consists of the value of the work of students, guidance and support, influence decision-making, improve self-esteem and use creativity. The findings in this study explains that there are a number of things that make students feel happy at school is associated with social relationships with peers and teachers, the physical condition of the school, lessons and achievements. So is the case with the factors that make students feel unpleasant experience at school is also associated with social relationships with peers such as bullying, school conditions included therein relating to the rules that apply in school and class materials.

Other findings of the study related to the things that make students feel not happy at school. Bullying becomes most students responded as things that make them uncomfortable at school. Numerous studies show that either perpetrators or victims of bullying will experience problems associated with decreased life satisfaction and support from peers when compared with other children who have no experience related to bullying [3]. In addition, victimization is also a risk of experiencing psychotic disorders in early adulthood [12]. But interestingly, the study found that peers and teachers have a major role in efforts to reduce the impact of bullying on the victim.

The implications of this study is that the students have a positive experience during his life in school, then a number of things have to be a concern, that schools need to create prevention programs to prevent bullying in schools, creating a positive school climate that is respectful, creating a good relationship between students with teachers and students with their peers and with regard to the physical condition of schools to promote comfort and safety of students while in school.

The study was limited only describe qualitative data obtained from the answers of participants, so it cannot explain empirically the correlation or the influence of various factors which are found on the wellbeing of students in the school. Researchers can then dig deeper on the influence of these factors on the wellbeing of students and their implications for the creation of a positive school climate.

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