

Effectiveness of Psychoeducation to Reduce Homesickness in Islamic Boarding School Students'

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the picture of homesickness in the first-year student of Islamic Boarding School Ummul Mukminin. The study was conducted using two approaches namely survey and quasi-experiment. Participants are new students aged 13-15 years old. Participants were divided into 2 (two) stages. The first stage is a stage of need analysis, in which researchers spread open questionnaires and are distributed to 300 students before intervention in the form of psychoeducation. In the second stage, the quasi-experimental procedure was carried out with a scaled deployment as a pre-test stage for 186 students who had moderate to high levels of homesickness. Data analysis of the questionnaire and open scale was done by coding and categorizing. A paired sample t-test was conducted to compare differences in the level of homesickness in students during pre- and post-test. The results of data analysis show that the interventions in the form of psychoeducation or psychological education have been proven to reduce the homesickness felt by participants through developing skills and abilities in facing challenges or problems.

Keywords: *Homesick, student, boarding school*

1. INTRODUCTION

Parents have a variety of reasons in choosing where to educate their children, both at regular schools or boarding schools. In contrast to schools in general, Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren) offer relatively different curricula [1]. Pesantren combines government curriculum with the curriculum made by the school management, so as the students - which in the tradition of pesantren commonly called santri - will have more comprehensive scientific insights and knowledge, which also became a different color than those obtained by students from schools - public school.

Another uniqueness in Islamic Boarding School is each of the students required to stay permanently throughout the education process. Hence, they are required to make adjustments with daily activities in the boarding environment, such as the obligation to pray 5 times in congregation at the mosque, following the study of the yellow book or contemporary, doing tadabbur, murojaah or tahsin, reading or memorizing the holy book of the Quran. Besides, students are also required to adjust with other students who come from different regional backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures, or perform very different activities on the daily habits, such as self-catering, do the laundry, and even clean the bed

themselves. These activities may be unfamiliar to students who are before living in the home with parents.

Separation from the home environment does not always have a positive impact, but it can also pose risks for individuals who are susceptible to experiencing increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and even can cause negative effects on health [2]. The decision to leave home by the adolescents can cause stressful conditions as the adolescents have to face challenges in adjusting to the new environment.

During the adjustment process, adolescents most likely will experience abrupt changes, from a familiar environment into a very new and unfamiliar environment. [3] Sunbul and Cekici stated that students would experience psychological problems in the form of deep longing in family members and feelings of alienation when they are in a new and unknown environment, which is known as homesickness. In general, homesickness is defined by Kegel [4] as a psychological reaction caused by the absence of individuals, close relatives, and the absence of a familiar environment. In particular, homesickness is a state of distress characterized by difficulty adjusting and a strong longing for the home. Feelings of homesickness in adolescents are often associated with negative conditions

such as nostalgia, loneliness, sadness, anxiety, separation, problems in assimilating new experiences, and difficulty to adjust with new environments.

Homesick can be considered as a serious problem for adolescents; however, to the present, homesick has not been given an adequate portion in scientific studies. According to Stroebe Schut and Nauta [5], although homesickness is a normal reaction for adolescents when leaving homes and the loved ones, it is very painful for those who experience it intensely. Sun and Heggedon [6] suggest that mild homesick can increase attachment and healthy coping skills. However, high and intense homesick levels experienced by individuals can cause a feeling of sadness, lack of concentration, and lack of ability to perform daily activities.

Most studies have shown that homesickness is associated with individuals' inability to function properly in daily lives, as well as other mental and physical health consequences. Biasi et al. [2] stated that homesickness is a complex problem in individuals who have an impact on the emotional, cognitive, social, and somatic functions of individuals. In detail, Stroebe et al. [5] argue that homesickness is associated with anxiety, loneliness, social isolation, and depression. Moreover, it can also worsen pre-existing mood and anxiety disorders or trigger new problems, ranging from insomnia, memory problems, changes in appetite or digestive difficulties, immune deficiency, or even diabetes.

Students' first year in a boarding school is a period of transition which is vulnerable to homesickness as students life transform from living at home with all family members, then had to be separated and live far from home. Even so, the emotional and psychological experiences felt by each student highly depend on adaptation and various factors in the environment. Thurber and Walton [7] explain that differences in students' responses regarding separation and homesickness are influenced by students' perception who considered this experience as a stimulating adventure, both socially and intellectually. However, other students might perceive this period of transition as extraordinary and troublesome. The student considers that the challenges when living away from home often raises doubts about the personal capability to change these conditions. Adjustment to a new environment will certainly bring discomfort to students, particularly in the development of social and academic self-concepts. Furthermore, changes to the new routine, social environment, and perceived demands can cause intense homesickness.

Almost everyone will experience a phase of longing at some point in their lives. Research conducted by Fisher [8] suggests that 50% to 75% of individuals in the general population had experienced homesickness at least once during their lives, and between 10% to 15% of homesickness involves longing. Although there is no

explanation yet about how much the level of contribution from longing, homesick still has a big impact on individuals' emotional life. Thurber and Walton [7] described that more than 15 million adolescents who spent most of their teenage years away from home are at high risk of experiencing homesickness.

Several factors can cause homesickness in students; however, the most common factor is the challenges that often have to be faced alone. Thurber and Walton [7] stated that the challenge to adjust with the new environment could be complicated, mainly when there are huge cultural differences between home and school settings, and if there are significant changes in the frequency of contact with the primary caregivers.

Research by Borg and Cevai [9] explained that the separation between student and families cause influential changes in a students life, as the communication intensity between both parties tends to be limited after migration into school. Some of these conditions make adolescents unable to be separated from the family, thus causing a homesickness reaction when leaving home.

Based on preliminary studies and data in the field, the foundation's management and the supervisor stated that the main problem for new students is the adjustment to the school life which often leads to aggressive behavior, sadness, or withdrawal. Therefore, researchers make a further investigation about the phenomenon of homesickness.

2. METHOD

This research was conducted with two approaches, survey, and quasi-experiments. The survey method is used to get a picture of homesickness, while the quasi-experiment is used to test the effectiveness of the psychoeducation module as an effort to reduce homesickness. Some several variables and terms need to be explained and limited in this study, namely:

- a. Homesickness is distress, disturbance, or uncomfortable conditions that are caused by long-term separation from home. Homesickness referred to in this study is separation from parents and family when the students were entering boarding schools. The variable of homesickness in the current study was measured with the homesick scale.
- b. The description of homesickness is related to the degree of uncomfortable feelings faced by students at boarding school, and actions taken by students to cope with it.
- c. Psychoeducation is one of the interventions carried out based on need analysis by providing important information related to causes and treatments related to the problems experienced.

Participants in this study are first-year students of the Islamic Boarding School Ummul Mukminin Makassar City, aged 13-15 years, totaling 300 students at the junior high school level. Participants are divided into two stages. The first stage serves as a need analysis phase, which is conducted before the psychoeducation intervention. In this stage, participants were asked to complete an open questionnaire containing three questions, 1) what makes students feel comfortable at home?, 2) What makes students uncomfortable at boarding schools?, 3) What things are done when feeling uncomfortable?. In the second stage, a quasi-experimental procedure was conducted by distributing

the pre-test scale to 186 students. However, there were only 105 participants who completed the questionnaire and have a moderate to high levels of homesickness that is included in the further analysis.

Data collection in this study used two instruments that are an open questionnaire and scale. The item in the questionnaire is used to get a clear picture of students' homesickness, whereas the scale of the homesick aims to test the effectiveness of the psychoeducation module. 19 items have been tested for validity ($\alpha = 0.67$) and reliability (0.949). Below is the blueprint of the homesickness scale:

Table 1. BluePrint Homesick Scale

Model	Indicator	No. Item		Total
		F	UF	
Deprivation	Feel lost of family members	4	8	2
	Feel lost of best friend	-	14	1
Interruption and discontinuity	Unable to adapt to the new environment	-	9, 18	2
	Resist to change old habits	5	-	1
	Low control of the environment	-	10	1
	Don't know how to handle demands in a new place	1	15. 19	3
Change and transition	Change the concept of self to adjust to the new environment	-	11, 16	2
	Take on new roles that have never been felt before	6	17	2
Conflict	Desire to enjoy a new environment but experience obstacles	2, 7	12	3
	Feel comfortable in a new environment, but continue to imagine the comfort in the old place	3	13	2
	Total	7	12	19

3. RESULT

The following describes the results of data analysis from the questionnaire and scale that has been distributed. It starts with an exposure to the results of an open questionnaire, which is then coded and categorized.

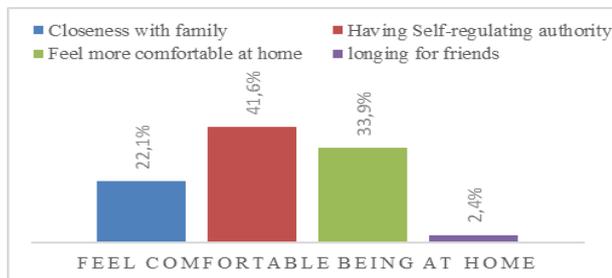


Figure 1 Factors that cause a sense of comfort at home

Based on figure 1, it can be explained that students feel comfortable being at home for several reasons, such as: close to family (22.1%), feel comfortable, and have the authority to regulate themselves (41.6%), existing facilities at home are complete and comfortable than boarding school (33.9%), and feel more comfortable because they are close to friends (2.4%).

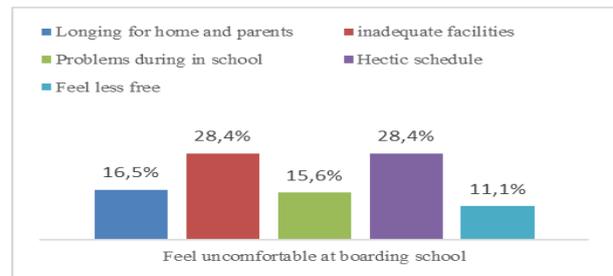


Figure 2 Factors that cause a feeling of discomfort in boarding schools

Furthermore, the surveys explore the participant's reasons to feel uncomfortable staying in boarding schools. Based on the graph above, new students feel uncomfortable being at the school for several reasons; such as longing for home and the parents (16.5%), inadequate facilities of the boarding schools (28.4%), problems which occurred during the school session (15.6%), a busy schedule of activities (28.4%), and feel less free during the stay in boarding school (11.1%).

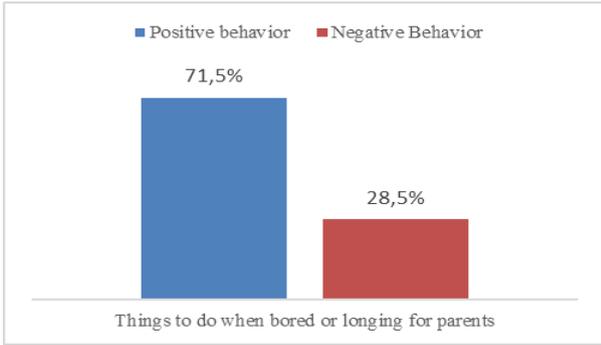


Figure 3 Things to do when bored and longing for parents

Based on the graph above, it can be seen that categorically, the behavior exhibited by students when they feel bored is divided into two, positive behavior (71.5%), and negative behavior (28.5%).

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Homesickness

	Level of homesickness (Percentage of the student)					N	Average	Highest Score	Lowest Score
	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low				
Pre-test	4 (3.81)	41 (39.1)	32 (30.5)	28 (26.6)	0 (0)	105	6.771	13	1
Post-test	0 (0)	0 (0)	20 (19.1)	80 (76.2)	5 (4.76)	105	3.181	7	1

Based on table 2, the descriptive-analytical statistic of homesickness in the pre-test showed an average of 6.771, with the highest value of 13 and the lowest value of 1. The result showed that 4 (3.81%) students experienced a very high level of homesickness, 41 (39.1%) students with high category, 32 (30.5%) students at moderate levels, and the other of 28 (26.6%) students in a low level. Data on the pretest showed that the average students could be categorized as having a high degree of homesickness.

Besides, analysis of the post-test data showed significant changes. The results of the descriptive analysis showed an average value of 3.181, the highest value of 7, and the lowest value of 1. The results of the analysis showed that there were no students who had very high and high levels of homesickness in the post-test testing, 20 (19.1%) students were in the moderate category, 80 (76.2%) students at the low category, and 5 (4.76) in the very low category. This shows that on average students have a low level of homesickness after being given a psychoeducation module.

3.1. Effectiveness of the Psychoeducation Module

Data collection was carried out on 105 participants from 9 classes. Participants were given a homesickness scale as a pre-test then they received a psychoeducation treatment. Furthermore, the homesickness scale was given back as a post-test to determine the effect of the psychoeducation module. The data of the pre-test and post-test were tested using paired sample t-test using SPSS 23 to test the hypotheses that have been proposed in this study.

In categorizing the level of homesickness in students, researchers used five categories, very high (> 12), high (8-10), moderate (5-7), low (1-4), very low (0). The results of data analysis related to students' pre-and post-test homesickness level can be seen in table 2.

3.2. Paired sample t-test

Table 3. Correlation Test Result

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pretest and Posttest	105	0.545	0.000

Table 3 shows the value of the correlation coefficient between the intervention of psychoeducation modules and homesickness to students by 0.545. This shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two variables.

Table 4. Paired Sample Test Result

	Mean	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest – Posttest	2.151	16.432	185	0.000

Based on the table above, the calculated t value of 16.432 is obtained. T table value is seen from the t distribution table, which is equal to 1.659. A probability value of 16.432 > 1.659 indicates that there is a significant decrease in the results of homesickness during pre-test and post-test.

4. DISCUSSION

Over the life span, individuals are required to make decisions in various aspects of their lives, including in determining whether to choose a public school or religion-based school, such as an Islamic boarding school. Religion-based school is a type of educational institution that emphasizes holistic education, which is not only fostering on the cognitive aspects but also the emotional and spiritual aspects of the students. Therefore, in general, Islamic school management requires the students to live in the boarding school environment, and inhabit places (dormitories) that have been prepared by the boarding school management.

The obligation to live in a school dormitory aims to make the process of guidance for the students be carried out optimally and thoroughly. However, the students gave various responses related to the obligation to live in the dormitory. Some research results show that first-year students who live in Islamic boarding schools experience many obstacles related to physical, psychological, and environmental problems. The obligation to live in a dormitory causes students to live separately - and even over great distances - with their parents, siblings, and playmates. This condition of distance and place causes natural reactions, such as crying for days, feeling sad, feeling very longing, even to extreme reactions such as withdrawing and leaving the boarding school without the knowledge of the boarding school supervisor. This condition is referred to as homesickness.

Homesickness often occurs when individuals experience a change of residence while adapting to a new environment, thus creating stress that is characterized by feelings of anxiety, loneliness, discomfort, and even withdrawal. This condition causes the individual to have the desire to return to their home areas. Homesickness is a spontaneous emotion that is felt by adults and children due to separation from the home, parents, or certain objects that are loved.

The results showed that first-year students in Ummul Mukminin Islamic Boarding School experienced a high level of homesickness. Based on interviews with students after the pre-test was given, there were several problems felt by the students, such as feeling insecure with the disciplinary rules applied by the school management which were considered too strict; feeling bored with the series of activities that binds every student; conflict with other students; feeling uneasy; unable to pay school fees or tuition for dormitories, or often claim to be sick. Widiastono suggested that the adaptation process in the boarding school environment can cause stress in the early days of school [1]. Different conditions between home and dormitories can be a source of stress (stressor) to students.

Students with a low level of homesickness described a sense of comfort living in boarding schools as they get

new friends and social support from friends and mentors who lived together in the boarding school. On the contrary, The students who experienced a high level of homesickness identified difficulties in living in boarding schools, as they feel unable to live far from families. Besides, students also exhibit some responsive behavior, such as crying almost every night and refusing to participate in scheduled activities at the boarding school.

The stage of human development referring, the first year period in junior high school occurs at the age of 12-14 years, which is classified as an early adolescent phase. Borg and Cefai [9] stated that the separation between family and child is one of the changes that affect adolescents. The intensity of communication between children and families tend to be limited, which raises homesickness reaction when leaving the house.

One treatment that can be given to new students who experience homesickness is psychoeducation. Psychoeducation by Trotzer [10] defined that is formed from a combination of two words, namely psycho and education. The term psychoeducation is translated as psychological education, placing personal education and social education in a collaborative context.

Psychoeducation is a form of expanding the role of a counselor who naturally charge of counseling, either individually or in groups [10]. Walsh [11] explains that psychoeducation is a form of intervention that can be given to individuals, families, or groups. Psychoeducation is practically aimed to educate participants in facing challenges and problems encountered in their lives. Also, through the psychoeducation approach, participants are technically directed to develop supportive potentials that can help overcome the challenges they face.

Psychoeducation interventions aim to help students develop the ability to overcome any challenges encountered in their lives. The new students of Ummul Mukminin Islamic Boarding School are participants who based on the results of pre-test data processing, showed the presence of homesick at various levels. Homesickness experienced by each participant caused some difficulties, especially in terms of adjusting to the new environment in the boarding school as they faced new rules, new friends, relatively new activities, and a very different atmosphere from what has been found in their respective homes.

The results showed differences in homesickness levels between pre-test and post-test. Participants who were included in psychoeducation activities experienced a decrease in the level of homesickness. The results of the statistical analysis obtained the calculated value of 16.432. T table value seen from the t distribution table obtained a t-value of 1.659. A probability value of $16,432 > 1,659$, which indicates that there is a significant decrease by comparing the results before the treatment in

the form of psychoeducation given (pre-test) and after treatment (post-test). Hence, it showed that the ability of students to adjust after attending a private-social guidance program had increased.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings obtained in this study, it can be concluded:

- a. Overview of homesick experienced by students:
 - 1) Students described a feeling of comfort living at home due to: feeling close to parents and family, dependency on parent's help in certain activities, the authority to regulating personal activities, access to various facilities, and a feeling of longing and desire to remain close and connect with friends.
 - 2) Factors that cause discomfort in boarding school are feelings of longing with parents and families, lack of facilities in boarding school, and problems-related to boarding schools, such as seniority culture, loss of goods, sickness, a busy schedule of activities, limited time to rest, less free, and strict rules.
 - 3) Students showed various responses to boredom and longing for parents, which can be categorized into positive behavior and negative behavior. Positive behavior in question includes calling parents, venting with friends, looking for entertainment, singing, reading books, reading the Qur'an, praying, washing, looking at parents' photos, walking around the boarding school environment, and writing letters to yourself; while negative behaviors include being alone, daydreaming, snacking, continuing to remember the days still at home, silence, crossing out a book, feeling dizzy, anxious and sad.
- b. The provision of intervention in the form of psychoeducation is proven to help reduce the homesickness felt by the participants. The results of the comparison between pre-test and post-test show that there are significant differences. Providing psychoeducation can help participants in developing their skills and abilities in facing challenges or problems they face.

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