

Conflict in Javanese Adolescents' Friendship and its Resolution Strategy

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Abstract. Friendship is a voluntary interpersonal relationship based on liking. Through friendship, someone learns how to know and understand others' behavior. However, friendships can be interrupted for some reasons. The aim of this preliminary research was to explore the adolescence experiences with friends, especially if they had ever had a conflict with friend and how to cope with it. Participants were 346 adolescents in high school who had a good friend and identified themselves as Javanese consisted of 187 girls and 159 boys (M 14.63, SD 1.66). The data were collected by an open-ended questionnaire. Participants were asked about their experiences of conflict with friends and how to cope it. Finally, there were 330 (95,38%) participants said that they had ever had a conflict with friends. Qualitative data were categorized, quantified, and then statistically analyzed. The results showed that the majority of the respondents have ever had conflicts with friends and mostly because of having a communication problem. Most of them were more likely to use avoidiance or non-confrontational strategies when resolving conflict with friends. They choose to not talk to each other, keep silent and take a distance for a while. It was called jothakan or meneng-menengan in Javanese term. The existence of jothakan as a conflict resolution happened because Javanese culture doesn't give room for an individual to express conflict openly, all behavior must be managed to keep the harmony in the social relationship. The dynamic of jothakan will be explored in the further research.

Keywords: Javanese adolescence, conflict in friendship, resolution strategy

Introduction

Friendship is basically an interpersonal relationship voluntarily made based on liking, not arranged by blood nor formal bonds. Friends become important interpersonal resources during adolescence. Through friendship, someone learns to know and understand others, to find suitable ways to show oneself and to find friends who are suitable for himself/herself. But it could not be denied that friendships do not always give a positive experience that brings enjoyable things. Sometimes friends become a source of conflict and give an unpleasant experience that may destruct or cut the friendship.

The appearance of conflict in friendship will surely disturb the harmony of the relationship, especially if the conflict is not solved appropriately and immediately. Thus, a conflict resolution becomes an important part in maintaining the friendship (Zimmermann, 2003; Oswald, Clark & Kelly, 2004) as well as a dimension of friendship quality (Parker & Asher, 1993; Weiss & Smith, 1999). Maintaining friendship is an individual behavior in keeping friends in a long-term relationship in order to get satisfaction in that interaction. In other words, the existence of conflict in friendship will push better ways to solve the conflict so that the relationship can be kept in a long-term (Leadbeater, Ohan, & Hogg, 2006).

The strategy of conflict resolution is influenced by the culture in its context. Previous cultural researches showed that in individualistic society people tend to assertive, dominating, and use confrontation strategy in conflict resolution. On the contrary, collective society

emphasizes the collective harmony so they used compromising and tend to avoid conflict as far as possible (Lather, Jain, & Shuka, 2010). It was undeniable, compromise or negotiation was a good strategy in managing conflict, but openness and bravery to express the arguments were needed in the process of compromise or negotiation. So how is the reality in Javanese society context?

Finding references about conflict resolution in Javanese society context was not easy. The unavailability concept of conflict management might because in Javanese culture people used to suppress conflict or avoid open conflict in order to keep the harmony (Mulder, 1984, Geertz, 1983). Becoming real Javanese (dadi wong Jawa) meant becoming a culturally civilized human who knew the time and the place of doing or behaving (empan papan). Javanese were hoped to know the social rule and be able to apply the knowledge on the right place at the right time as well as good at placing oneself in every situation so that social structure could be maintained by chit-chat appropriately, behave politely and avoid open conflict (Magnis-Suseno, 2006). Even when there was a conflict, one party chose to be silent (meneng), so that the relationships seemed to be fine. This reality was mostly found in Javanese marital relationships (Andayani, 2001; Mawardi, 2013; Lestari, Faturochman, Adiyanti, & Walgito, 2013). When there was disagreement in the domestic area, the wife would keep it as tight as possible in order not to let it become an open conflict. In Javanese society, if somebody outside the family knew about the domestic problem, especially husband-wife relationship conflict, it was embarrassing because they were considered to fail in keeping harmony.

Did that happen in friendship too? This research was aimed to reveal the reality of conflict in Javanese adolescent friendship. i.e. about the source of conflicts and the strategy used to overcome it.

Method

Exploratory research in this study used grounded-theory methods as the primary methodological framework (Straus & Corbin, 1990) aimed to dig broader and deeper information, and to categorize something that becomes the focus of the research. In this case, the focus was about the conflict in Javanese adolescence to identify the sources and the strategies to overcome.

All participants were selected with the main criteria having a good friend at school, identifying themselves as Javanese who live in Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia. The whole participants were 346 Javanese adolescence consisted of 187 girls and 159 boys (M 14.63, SD 1.66). Participants were asked about their experiences in having a conflict with their friends and how to cope with it. Based on the answers of all them, the result of research showed that from the total number of participants (N=346) only 16 (4,62%) participants consisted of seven girls and nine boys said they had never had a conflict with their friends. There were 330 (95,38%) participants consisted of 180 girls and 150 boys said that they had ever had a conflict with friends.

Data were collected by open-ended questionnaire with two questions. The first question was “Have you ever had a conflict with your friend? If the participant answers “yes”, then she/he has to give an explanation about what was the main cause of conflict. From this question, it could be seen that each participant stated more than one cause of his/her conflict meaning that it was multiple-respond. Further, the participant had to answer the next question, i.e. “What did you do at the first time when you had that conflict?” Based on the direction of the question, the expected response given by the participants was single-respond although there was a chance for someone to use various ways at a time.

Data were analyzed by grounded theory method consisted of open coding, focused coding, and axial coding (Corbin & Straus, 1990). The answers were subsequently categorized in accordance with the themes. In open coding stage, several keywords were obtained. The next stage was identifying categories and subcategories of these keywords, resulting in major themes constituting the core or central phenomenon of the topic under study. The result of the categorization was further analyzed using crosstab analysis technique.

Results

As stated before that 346 participants who have good friends at school, 330 of them admitted that they had a conflict with their friends and only 16 admitted that they had never had a conflict with their friends. This fact proved that conflict was an inseparable part of social

relations, including in the context of friendship even among good friends.

Core category 1: the source of conflict

It had been described that 330 participants ever had a conflict with their good friends, in which the sources of conflict were various and complex. Like what was stated by some participants as follows, “because of different opinion, his egoism, and like to break the promise” (Subject Number 30/Boy/16 y.o), “because my friend is selfish, sometimes mocked me that made me hurt, and sometimes also like to tell lies (S.56/B/15), “over jokes so someone got hurt, then different opinion that cause the quarrel (S.6/Girl/15), “misunderstanding, disagreement, because of miscommunication and lack of understanding” (S.14/G/16). But there were some participants answering with more than one answer although when being observed, the content had the same meaning like the one being stated by this participant,” my friend was lying, he/she didn’t tell the truth (S.17/G/16). There was some single response such as, “because of misunderstanding” (S.113/B/15), or “the person is egoist” (S.119/B/14).

Based on the fact, there were 434 keywords found as the sources of conflict. Various keywords with the same meaning were categorized in one theme and lead to four main themes finally, i.e. having a communication problem, psychological hurting, negative personality traits, competition, and physical hurting. Table 1 showed the main source of conflict in Javanese adolescents’ friendship based on the frequency of responses.

Table 1. The sources of conflict in Javanese adolescents’ friendship

Categorization	Girls		Boys		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Having communication problem	105	24.19	70	16.13	175	40.32
Misunderstanding	55	12.67	37	8.53	92	21.20
Miscommunication	21	4.84	22	5.07	43	9.91
Dominance in arguing	29	6.68	11	2.53	40	9.22
Psychological hurting	63	14.52	46	10.60	109	25.12
Betrayal	43	9.91	22	5.07	65	14.98
Hurting someone’s self esteem	9	2.07	15	3.46	24	5.53
Borrowing thing without permission	11	2.53	9	2.07	20	4.61
Negative personal traits	58	13.36	24	5.53	82	18.89
Dishonest	21	4.84	9	2.07	30	6.91
Selfish	19	4.38	5	1.15	24	5.53
Disloyal	8	1.84	7	1.61	15	3.46
Envy or jealousy	10	2.30	3	0.69	13	3.00
Competition	18	4.15	29	6.68	47	10.83
Compete for boy/girlfriend	8	1.84	9	2.07	17	3.88
Fight for position in academic/sports	6	1.38	10	2.30	16	3.69
Loss of competition	4	0.92	10	2.30	14	3.23
Physical hurting	7	1.61	14	3.23	21	4.84
Pushing	4	0.92	4	0.92	8	1.84
Touching head	3	0.69	4	0.92	7	1.61
Kicking	0	0.00	6	1.38	6	1.38
Total responses	251	57.83	183	42.17	434	100

Based on the percentage of the number of responds stated by all participants, it was seen that the conflict appeared mostly because of communication problem i.e.

misunderstanding, miscommunication, and dominance in arguing. The next cause was psychological hurting i.e. betrayal by broken trust, tell the secret to others, talk behind someone's back or ngrasani (mostly stated by girls), then hurting someone's self-esteem by teasing parents' name or their job (mostly stated by boys), and borrowing something without permission. The other factor was negative personal traits i.e. selfish, dishonest, disloyal, envy or jealousy whenever see peers being more successful. This factor happened more in girls' than in boys' friendship. Another factor was competition i.e. compete for boy/girlfriend, fight for position in the academic or sports team, and loss of competition. Sometimes this situation caused envy and jealousy as mentioned in the previous factor. The next factor was physical hurting because of being kicked, pushed, and touched the head. For the doer, the action formerly was done as a joke but for the victim, it was considered as an over-joke that couldn't be accepted. Competition and physical hurting factors appeared more in boys' than in girls' friendship.

Core Category 2: The Resolution Strategy of Conflict

From 330 participants who admitted that they have had a conflict with their friends, it was revealed that the first thing to be done by Javanese adolescence when facing conflict was various. Suitable with the direction of this second question, the participants' respond was single, so there were 330 keywords representing the way the adolescence handle the conflict. Those various ways may have the same meaning so they might be categorized into one theme. The process of categorization started by open coding, then axial coding and ended by selective coding as shown in the following scheme.

From that coding process was found 35 groups of initial theme for 330 key words in open coding. In the first axial coding phase, those 35 initial themes then categorized into 15 subthemes and then downsized into nine subthemes in the second axial coding. From the nine subthemes, finally found four main themes representing the strategy in conflict resolution done by Javanese adolescent, namely avoiding, confronting, accomodating, dan compromising. The following Table 2 presents the result of data analyses based on the percentage of each type of those conflict resolution.

Table 2.Percentage types of conflict resolution Strategy in Javanese Friendship

Categorization	Girls		Boys		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Avoiding	124	37.58	90	27.27	214	64.85
Social avoiding	122	36.97	88	26.27	210	63.64
Emotional avoiding	2	0.61	2	0.61	4	1.21
Confrontating	25	7.58	29	8.79	54	16.36
Physical confrontating	5	1.52	15	4.55	20	6.06
Verbal confrontating	17	5.15	13	3.94	30	9.09
Nonverbal confrontating	3	0.91	1	0.30	4	1.21
Accomodating	24	7.27	26	7.88	50	15.15
Active	21	6.36	22	6.67	43	13.03
Passive	3	0.91	4	1.21	7	2.12
Compromising	7	2.12	5	1.52	12	3.64
Asertif	3	0.91	2	0.61	5	1.52
Negosiatif	4	1.21	3	0.91	7	2.12
Total	180	54.5	150	45.5	330	100

The final result of the categorization process showed that there were four types of conflict resolution strategies in Javanese friendship. The first strategy was avoiding.

A majority, the participants –both boys and girls- choose to avoid the conflict as a conflict resolution. This avoiding strategy was expressed in two ways, i.e (1) social avoidance by being silent or by avoiding the existence, stay away socially, avoid to meet; (2) avoiding emotionally, i.e the one who avoids sulked, cried, and had a grudge.

Different from the first strategy, the second strategy was offensive because it was done by confronting. The attacking strategy was expressed by the participants in three ways, i. e. (1) physical confrontation in the form of physical attack involving both parties in fighting, and physical attack by one party punching the other party, done by boys, and pinching as well as pulling hair or veil done by girls; (2) verbal confrontation involving both sides by arguing or quarrel, and verbal attack done by one party by insinuation, mocking and swearing (3) nonverbal confrontation by giving sharp look or expressing anger by cynical and hostile look (Javanese term: *penthelengan* or *plerokan*).

Besides those two strategies above, the third strategy was accommodating. Commonly this strategy was done by giving in and asking for an apology. Another form of the active accommodating strategy was introspection and there were those who prayed for their friends' good deeds. While the passive form of this accommodative strategy was letting the conflict go as if there was no problem, not to take the conflict as a big deal, patient, and tawakal (surrender to Allah).

The fourth strategy was compromising. This strategy was marked by the guts to tell or ask openly about what was the source of the conflict between them. One party would assertively tell what was the problem, or ask the other party to talk about things that caused conflict between them. In this phase, the ability to negotiate, to discuss and to find the solution that may satisfy both parties would be developed.

Table 2 showed that there was no difference between boys and girls in choosing the kinds of strategy when they had a conflict with their friends. Majority both of them chose avoiding strategy (37.58% girls & 27.27% boys), confronting (7.58% girls & 8.79 boys), accommodating (7.27% girls & 7.88% boys), whereas compromising was the last choice of 2.12% girls & 1.52% boys. The no-difference result was also supported by the result analysis using crosstab analysis technique. Based on gender (boys and girls) dan types of resolution strategy of conflict (avoiding, confronting, accomodating, and compromising) was found the value of Chi-Square ($X^2(d)$) from avoiding worth of 2.83(1) with $p=.09$ ($p>.05$), $X^2(d)$ confrontating=1.77(1); $p=.18$ ($p>.05$), $X^2(d)$ accomodating=1.02(1); $p=.31$ ($p>.05$), and $X^2(d)$ compromising=0.07(1); $p=.79$ ($p>.05$).

Although there was no significant difference about the priority in the kinds of strategy based on those four main categories, from the result of analysis on risk estimate value between boys and girls choosing each kind of resolution, the result was as follows: girls had the chance to choose to avoid 1.15 more than boys, and choosing not tend to confront 1.07 more than boys.

Whereas from accommodating, the chance of the girls to choose to accommodate was only 0.77 times compared to the boys and compromising 1.17 times compared to boys.

Discussion

Based on the source of conflict stated by the participants, it could be seen that the biggest cause of the conflict in Javanese adolescent' friendship was the factor of communication problem. It was admitted by the participants that the misunderstanding caused by lack of communication skill especially to tell the opinion or the idea of something properly and effectively. Querreling would be sharper whenever one party defend the opinion strongly/push the argument or dominated the talk. This finding was inline with what Wirawan (2010) stated that one of the conflict sources was lack of effective communication skill. So did Swanstroem & Weismann (2005) who stated that conflict was not only represented as a violence or hostile but also different point of view toward recent issues. If not properly faced, this different might trigger conflict or argument. It was not suprising if an argument or querrel as one way to cope with the conflict choosed by Javanese adolescence.

The second cause factor was psychologycal hurting done by making jokes of the parents' names or jobs, or saying something that may hurt someone's self esteem. Besides that, the main cause in this category was represented by situation or somethings that might destroy trust such as not telling the truth, broken one's promise, telling the secret to others, talking behind someone's back (Javanese: *ngrasani*), and borrowing something without permission. This finding was in line with the result of research done by Anastassia & Faturochman (2014) toward 153 adolescence in Yogyakarta which showed that 76,47% of the participants admitted that they had experienced betrayal. The majority was done in the form of telling secrets to others, breaking promises and lying. The importance of trust in friendship was also stated by Indrayanti & Adiwibowo (2008) that a close friend should be able to keep secret and reliable. On the contrary, a friend who liked to tell lies, to break the promise and to leak the secrets may destroy the trust given to him/her by the good or best friend.

Besides betrayal, bad personal characters and competition were admitted by Javanese adolescences as the cause of conflict among them. Personal characters that often being the cause of the conflict was an egoist, arrogant, dishonest, and too dominant. This was in line with the result of preliminary research done by Andayani (2014) that a friend who was humble, kind, funny and friendly was liked more than the one who was aloof and boring. This is also in line with the researches done by Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir (2003) that a kind, joyful, friendly and humorous tent to have a more stable relationship.

While competition factors triggering conflict in Javanese adolescence friendship in a competition of academic and nonacademic was like a fight for position

in the sports team or competition in winning attention from the opposite sex. The impact of this situation putting one party as the winner or the loser, the losing position might make someone being envy because he/she disliked seeing other people's success. This negative feeling Was in line with the definition of envious stated by Vecchio (2005) as a feeling of unhappy and feeling hurt in seeing happiness felt by other party or seeing other people has something that he/she wanted to have but failed to be fulfilled.

Further discussion about the choice of conflict resolution strategy in Javanese adolescents' friendship showed that it couldn't be separated from the influence of local culture. Some cross-culture researches showed that individualistic society oriented to saving self-esteem so it tended to uses confrontation in handling conflict. On the contrary, a collectivistic society like the ones in Asian countries including Indonesia, put harmony in living-in-groups so avoiding was chosen as a conflict resolution. A cross-culture research done by Ohbuchi & Takahashi (1994) in 94 Japanese university students and 98 American students showed that Japanese students had a big tendency to avoid conflict because they were motivated to defend relationship and had a good perception about communal responsibility. It also happened in Javanese in which the society highly valued the culture of harmony through the principles of living harmoniously and respect (Magnis-suseno, 2006). As an effort to create and nurture those values, Javanese people were accustomed to avoiding open conflict in order to keep the harmony (Mulder, 1984, Magnis-suseno, 2006). It was not surprising that avoiding become a conflict resolution chosen by most Javanese adolescence when facing conflict in friendship.

Avoiding as a strategy of conflict resolution in Javanese society was also found in a research done by Latipun (2015) to adolescent in Malang, East Java, Indonesia that preventing and avoiding hostility was a concept of peace. An adolescent who behaved peacefully could develop better attitude and behavior, could accept difference toward others, not arising conflict, calm, and keeping peace in his surrounding/environment.

On the other side, there were some adolescents who choose confrontation to overcome conflict. The choice to attack physically, verbally or non-verbally was found in Javanese boys and girls. According to Latipun (2015) violence, hostility, and other destructive activities might destroy peace actions in adolescent. It also existed in the context of friendship, when an adolescent choose to do reckless actions, take it for granted without rational considerations in handling conflict might destroy the harmony of friendship.

But this research also showed that not all adolescent thought the conflict in friendship as something to be faced with hard ways. For some adolescents who admitted not to take conflict as a big deal, they tended to choose a more accommodative strategy to overcome it. The strategy mostly chosen was giving in and asking for an apology when they made mistake. Besides that, some of them choose to introspect, to be patient, to let it

happen, and vice versa. Even there were those who prayed for their friends' good deeds. This reality was in line with the characteristic of Javanese culture of *tepa sarira*. In Javanese self-reflection, according to Bratakesawa, *tepa sarira* was the third level after *nandhing sarira* and *ngukur sarira*. It was impossible to bring harmony into reality when someone was still in the level of *nandhing sarira* because it was the lowest level in self-assessment in which he/she was still showed his/her ego, leading to egocentrism. It was very difficult for someone in this level to give in and to ask or apology so the strategy chosen was tended to challenging other party or rising confrontation.

Furthermore, it was stated by Mulder (1984), Soeryoedoyo (1980), dan Tanpoaran (1988) that the value of *tepa sarira* culture taught us to care to others. Someone who knew *tepa sarira* would be soft in speaking and behaving, avoiding things that might hurt others. This was in line with what was mentioned by Steen, Kachorek, & Peterson (2003) that caring to others, behaving full of respect to others, and able to handle interpersonal problems healthily and constructively was positive characteristics that were expected to be owned by adolescents.

Although negotiating and compromising were good strategies in handling conflict, in the context of Javanese adolescences friendship only 12 (3.64%) choose to compromise as conflict resolution. As explained at the beginning of this discussion, the characteristic of Javanese culture was the obligation to take social harmony as a priority. Stated by Geertz (1983) and Magnis-suseno (2006) that Javanese society created and nurtured harmony in three feelings, namely: afraid (*wedi*), ashamed (*isin*), and reluctant (*sungkan*) as self-restraint to respect others. Furthermore, Mulder (1984) stated that behavior must be arranged, the open conflict must be avoided, all will, ambition and personal desire that might destroy social harmony must be suppressed and not expressed openly to keep the harmony of Javanese society. So if a conflict appeared in any kind of social relationship, the Javanese values system wouldn't give any room for an individual person to express the feeling openly. This thing made Javanese adolescent tended to choose to avoid because they were not able to compromise yet.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the research, it could be concluded that conflict does happen normally in all settings even with good friends at school. Besides the source of conflict, this research also found that there were four strategies of conflict resolution done by Javanese adolescent, namely: avoiding, confronting, accommodating, dan compromising. There was no significant difference between girls and boys in choosing conflict resolution strategy as the first priority. Majority of them choose the avoiding strategy by being silent (Javanese term: *jothakan*). Based on that finding, the research dug the experience of Javanese adolescent

deeper is needed to be done, especially the *jothakan* phenomenon. Knowing why *jothakan* became the most-chosen strategy by Javanese adolescent in handling conflict with friends and how the dynamic of *jothakan* as one of conflict resolution in Javanese society. If this thing could be explained scientifically, then we could develop a conflict resolution strategy based on local wisdom from its context society.

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