

# Quality of life of Indonesian adolescents in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic

Herlin Fitriana Kurniawati<sup>a,1,\*</sup>, Herlin Fitriani Kurniawati<sup>b,2</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>b</sup>Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>herlinfitriana@unisayogya.ac.id\*; <sup>2</sup>herlinani@unisayogya.ac.id

\* corresponding author



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## ABSTRACT

The outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Indonesia has been declared as a public health emergency, which requires some prevention and control efforts as a mitigation strategy. This pandemic requires all activities to be carried out at home including school. This study aims to determine the quality of life of adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was conducted using a quantitative approach, and descriptive analytic method. It involved high school/vocational high school students in Kulon Progo who were willing to be respondents as the research subjects and samples. 301 respondents were selected using simple random sampling technique. The research instrument used The World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) –BREF. The data were analyzed descriptively by looking at the presented data percentage in the frequency distribution table. The research respondents comprised of 117 male respondents (39%) and 184 female respondents (61%), with an age range of 15-19 years old. 149 respondents (49.5%) were mostly satisfied with their health during the COVID-19 pandemic or having their health in the good category. 121 respondents (40.2%) mostly considered their ability to learn during the COVID-19 pandemic in the average category. 124 respondents (41.2%) who experienced negative feelings, such as feeling blues, anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic were mostly in the rare category. Most teenagers, 156 respondents (52%), have a good quality of life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## 1. Introduction

WHO has declared Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as a global pandemic (WHO, 2020). The public health restriction during the pandemic has requires all activities to be carried out at home, including school and other supporting activities. Over 90% of the world's students (more than 1.5 billion young people) is currently out of education because of social distancing policies (The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, 2020). Large-scale learning disorders can have serious consequences, limited access to health services, increased dropout rates, and the loss of social support for adolescents (UNICEF & WHO, 2020).

Stress concomitant with the COVID-19 pandemic is in the form of fear and anxiety about personal health, sleeping disorders, eating and concentration disorders, exacerbating physical condition for someone without a history of chronic illness and/or psychological disorders (Zhou et al., 2020). Adolescent anxiety levels during the COVID-19 pandemic are proven to be in the high category of 54%. Thus, it is necessary to mitigate this situation by providing counseling services to reduce the level of anxiety (Saputro, 2018).

Currently, there has been a lack of supporting facilities for both online and offline learning. It was revealed that 32% of children could not afford online learning program and were forced to have an independent learning, 30% of children had difficulty understanding lessons, 21% of children did not understand the teacher's instructions, 47% of children were bored staying at home, 35% of children were worried about being left behind in their lessons, 15% of children felt insecure, 34% were afraid of being infected with COVID-19 even though they were at home, 20% of children missed their friends, and 10% of children were worried about their parents' income. Other data indicated that 11% experienced physical violence because of an unusual learning process, and 62% of children underwent verbal violence. The data illustrates the high mental problems of children and adolescents during the pandemic if immediate anticipation is not taken. Mental health of children and adolescents in the midst of a pandemic is something worth concerning since mental health is known to incur a profound impact on a person's immunity, especially children and adolescents (Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2021a).

Based on data from the COVID-19 Task Force, as of July 19, 2020 of the total positive cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia, 8.1% were cases that occurred in children. This data detailed that there were 7,008 cases of children exposed to COVID-19, out of the total number of 79.5 million children in Indonesia (Kite et al., 2021). Likewise, there has been an increasing trend of COVID-19 in The Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY). As of September 21, 2020, 2312 positive cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed (Zhou et al., 2020).

## 2. Methods

This study used a quantitative approach to determine the distribution of data. This research was categorized as an analytical descriptive research. Using a cross sectional approach, this research aims to study the dynamics of the correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable by approaching, observing or collecting data all at once (point time approach).

The research involved high school/vocational students in Kulon Progo Yogyakarta Special Region with the criteria of being willing to become respondents as the research population. The population in this research were 3010 people. Determination of the sample of this research is 10% of the total population. The sample of this research is 301 respondents selected by simple random sampling technique. The data collection tool in this study was a structured questionnaire with questions related to variables that assessed the quality of life using a questionnaire from The World Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) -BREF. Respondents filled out the questionnaire by using google form.

The data was processed by following these approach i.e editing, coding, tabulating and analysing steps. This study used descriptive analytic method, by describing the data using a frequency distribution. This research protocol has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta (Approval Number: 1374/KEP-UNISA/III/2021)

## 3. Results/Findings

Kulon Progo Regency is one of five regencies/cities in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) which has a relatively small population in terms of number and percentage. The 2016 Population Census revealed that the total population of Kulon Progo was only 437,441 people, consisting of 216,902 men and 220,539 women.

The research respondents were comprised of 184 female respondents (61%). Most of the respondents, 109 respondents (36%), were at the age of 17 years old. It was also revealed that most adolescents, 156 respondents (52%), had a good quality of life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results of the frequency distribution of respondents' answers in this study showed that 149 respondents (49.5%) were mostly satisfied with their health during the COVID-19 pandemic or had their health classified in the good category. Most of the respondents, a total of 231 respondents (76.7%), stated that they did not need medical therapy at all to be able to function in daily life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the respondents, 154 respondents (51.2%), expressed that they could enjoy their life during the COVID-19 pandemic in the moderate category.

150 respondents (49.8%) could concentrate in the moderate category during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the respondents, a total of 142 respondents (47.2%), said they had little money to meet their needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the respondents, a total of 157 respondents

(52.2%), demonstrated that they had few opportunities to have fun/recreation during the COVID-19 pandemic. 121 respondents (40.2%) also revealed that they were satisfied with the ability to learn at the average category during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the respondents, 202 respondents (67.1%), answered that their satisfaction with the transportation used during the COVID-19 pandemic were at the average category. Most of the respondents, 124 respondents (41.2%), stated that they rarely had negative feelings such as “feeling blue” (lonely), hopelessness, anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 4. Discussion

The research results found that most teenagers, 156 respondents (52%), had a good quality of life during the COVID-19 pandemic. This result indicates that more than half of the respondents have a good quality of life despite the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the study are in line with Rogi's research that the majority of SMA Negeri 9 Manado students have a moderate level of quality of life in the domains of physical, psychological, social, and environmental health and have good academic achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2021b)

In recent years, health-related quality of life (HRQOL) has become a worldwide concern. In line with Ping et al, it is very important to have a good Health-related Quality of Life (HRQOL) during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ping et al., 2020a). In terms of maintaining a good mental health of adolescents in this difficult situation, parents should play an important role in managing stress and emotions, maintaining their calmness and building closer relationships with their children. The attitude of parents in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic can affect the mental condition of adolescents (Muhwava et al., 2020). COVID-19 has a negative impact on the HRQOL of children and/or adolescents (Nobari et al., 2021a).

Adolescents are a group of youths who are developing their social area. In a normal situation, adolescents can interact with friends to exchange experiences or do activities together. In addition, adolescents are also in the exploration stage to search for identity and character. However, the prevalence of COVID-19 pandemic has limited them from social interaction, which can lead to stress that triggers anxiety and feelings of disappointment (Nobari et al., 2021b). These feelings must be overcome to reduce its profound impact on the immunity or invulnerability of adolescents which will have an impact on their susceptibility to contract the disease. It is undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic has made adolescents feel isolated from their environment and groups, and feel they have been deprived of their time to hang out, and talk with their peers. Adolescents are lacking the ability in problem solving, self-control and emotional control, which can easily disturb their mental health. The vulnerability of adolescents to mental health problem has worsened since it remains unclear when the COVID-19 pandemic will end. The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased the feeling of boredom among adolescents, who are required to do almost all activities at home. Children and teens may seem less at risk for severe COVID-19 symptoms, but the pandemic has significantly disrupted their lives. Social distancing and disruption of school routines can be a particular challenge for adolescents (Dhaheri et al., 2021).

121 respondents (40.2%) considered their ability to learn during the COVID-19 pandemic as mostly in the average category. According to The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health, for teens social distancing and closure can be especially challenging. During adolescence, they shall grow in independence and begin to prioritize relationships with peers over parents. Nonetheless, the COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges for the welfare of adolescents' lives. Adolescents also feel worried about the things they will faced in the future (Solomou & Constantinidou, 2020b). A survey in Australia found that there were negative changes to physical activity, sleep disturbances, these changes were associated with higher depression and stress (Stanton et al., 2020).

A number of 150 respondents (49.8%) demonstrated that their concentration during the COVID-19 pandemic was in the moderate category. Ravens-Sieberer et al revealed that two-thirds of children and adolescents are reported to be severely burdened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Adolescents experienced significantly lower HRQoL (40.2% vs 15.3%), more mental health problems (17.8% vs 9.9%) and higher levels of anxiety (24.1% vs 14.9%) compared to conditions before the pandemic. Adolescents with low socioeconomic status, migration background and limited living space are significantly more affected (das Neves Martins Pires et al., 2021; N Kar et al., 2020). Health promotion and prevention strategies need to be implemented to maintain the mental health of children and

adolescents, improve their HRQoL, and reduce the burden caused by COVID-19, especially for children who are most at risk (Saputro, 2018). COVID-19 has an impact on mental health and quality of life, namely mild stress by 23.9%. Likewise, most teenagers (45%-62%) feel worried, or helpless due to COVID-19, which declines their quality of life (Al Dhaheri et al., 2021).

Satisfaction with health during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to 149 respondents (49.5%), was at the highest percentage and in the good category. In addition, most of them, 76.6%, did not need medical therapy to be able to function in daily life during the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding is not in line with the data recorded by The Higher Education Policy Institute that around 63% experienced a worsening mental health due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and besides 38% indicated satisfaction with the accessibility of mental health services (Kassie et al., 2021).

One of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is the reduced income in the family. This fact also has an impact on adolescents, where most of the 142 respondents (47.2%) stated that they had limited amount of money to meet their daily needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. This result corresponds with Al Dhaheri et al, that more than 40% reported increased stress from work and financial problems (Al Dhaheri et al., 2021). According to Ping et al, during the COVID-19 pandemic the risk of pain or discomfort in the general population in China increased significantly as well as lower income, epidemic effects, and worrying about contracting COVID-19 during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ping et al., 2020a).

This study found that 124 respondents (41.2%) who had negative feelings such as “feeling blue” (lonely), hopelessness, anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic were in the rare category. Ping et al., said that the most common problems experienced were pain or discomfort by 19.0% and anxiety or depression by 17.6%. Logistic regression models show that the risk of pain or discomfort, anxiety and worry about COVID-19 increases significantly (Ping et al., 2020b). One of the ways to curb anxiety and loneliness experienced by adolescents is by having a self-talk. Self-talk is an effective technique to maintain positive thinking for adolescents who are experiencing stress (Alfiasari & Oktriyanto, 2019; Saputro, 2018). MSolomou and Contantinidou highlighted that students are more at risk of having a greater negative impact on their quality of life and a higher risk for increased anxiety and depressive symptoms ( $p < 0.05$ ) during the COVID-19 pandemic (Solomou & Constantinidou, 2020a).

Similarly, according to WHO, the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable direct impact on students' life, not to mention the requirement to study from home. Students mostly undergo academic pressure, dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching, and fear of being infected with COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has stopped almost all youth outdoor activities, such as schooling and hanging out with friends without maintaining a strict social distance. Hence, adolescents feel stressed, depressed, anxious, and bored to stay at home continuously (Nilamadhab Kar et al., 2020; Violant-Holz et al., 2020). To cope with these feelings, sometimes they express their emotions and behavior. In this regard, parents need to be sensitive to the needs of their children who need mental health and psychosocial support support their children in the face of the pandemic condition, parents must pay attention to 4 basic rights of children, namely: the right to life, growth and development, protection and the right to participate (Farrell et al., 2020; Raposa et al., 2014).

Many things can be done by parents to reduce anxiety and improve the quality of life of teenagers, by providing them with correct information about the prevention of COVID-19, by way of explaining the need to keep a contact from or keep a distance from people or family members who have symptoms of COVID-19. Instead of scaring them, it is necessary to tell them immediately to have a medical check-up whenever they start to feel fever, sore throat, diarrhea, cough, or have shortness of breath. Parents can play as role models in implementing Germas (community movement), by cleaning the surrounding environment and having a healthy lifestyle with adequate rest, regular exercise, consumption of balanced nutritional values, diligently washing hands and socializing with friends and family members through social media. According to Al Dhaheri et al, about 42% of respondents reported receiving increased support from family members, 40.5% more concerned about their mental health, and more than 40% reported spending more time off since the pandemic began (Al Dhaheri et al., 2021).



## 5. Conclusion

The research revealed that most of the respondents had a good quality of life. To overcome mental health problems of adolescents in the face of difficult situations, parents need to play a role in managing stress and emotions and building a closer relationship with their children. The attitude of parents in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic can affect the mental condition and quality of life of adolescents.

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