FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN NURTURING STUDENTS’ RESILIENCE DURING REMOTE LEARNING IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

This research aims (1) to explore the family’s role in remote learning practice and (2) to find out what family can do to nurture students’ resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study employed qualitative descriptive methodology with a case study approach to obtain and analyse data narratively. The findings of this study are: (1) Family become the observer of students’ resilience and personality development, their observation will determine teachers’ approach in teaching and educating resilience virtue. Their role as facilitator in home learning shows their support and passion to engage with their children’s learning process. (2) Direct assistance during video conferencing is part of collaboration between school and family to participate in resilience-building, but only few parents did so due to diverse backgrounds.

Keywords: family engagement; COVID-19 pandemic; remote learning

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan (1) untuk mengeksplorasi peran keluarga dalam praktik pembelajaran jarak jauh dan (2) untuk mengetahui apa yang dapat dilakukan keluarga untuk memelihara ketahanan siswa selama pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus untuk memperoleh dan menganalisis data secara naratif. Temuan penelitian ini adalah: (1) Keluarga menjadi pengamat ketahanan dan perkembangan kepribadian siswa, observasi mereka akan menentukan pendekatan guru dalam mengajar dan mendidik ketahanan kebajikan. Peran mereka sebagai fasilitator dalam pembelajaran di rumah menunjukkan dukungan dan semangat mereka untuk terlibat dengan proses pembelajaran anak-anak mereka. (2) Bantuan langsung selama konferensi video merupakan bagian dari kerjasama antara sekolah dan keluarga untuk berpartisipasi dalam pembangunan ketahanan, tetapi hanya sedikit orang tua yang melakukannya karena latar belakang yang berbeda..

Kata kunci: keterlibatan keluarga, pandemic COVID-19, pembelajaran jarak jauh


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Introduction

Life happens dynamically, creating changes and unpredictable situations. People will face more complicated problems in this uncertain world. Following such a stressful life event, resilience becomes both a weapon and a resource for people to bounce back. Resilience is not an instant ability that can emerge anytime without a serious effort but rather long progress. It requires collaboration between parties supporting this action. This lengthy process will be best started as early as possible or since childhood to maintain a long-life skill. One of the forces we can conduct to foster resilience is through education.

Education is a controlled setting to develop students’ character, cognitive ability, psychomotor skills, and personality, including resilience. Even though school is a central place where education progress is implemented, it is undeniable that other indicators can influence students’ performances and learning processes. One is the children’s environment that can affect students’ behaviour and personalities such as school, teachers, students’ families and friends. This causal relationship was stated as part of a microsystem in the ecology of human development theory. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) (Edinette Maria Rosa, 2013)

Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic hits every single facet of people life. Almost every school system in the world suddenly transforms into remote learning to decrease this virus’s spread. This sudden transformation must be challenging as the school should arrange the master plan in such a short time. Technology and internet network becomes the bridge to connect students with school.

As part of the microsystem in ecology theory affecting students’ growth and development, the family faces a crisis during this pandemic. They have to assist and facilitate students in the process of online and virtual learning. Unfortunately, family or parents coming from diverse background might find difficulties in remote learning due to various factors, including lack of gadget and an internet connection, time management between work and assisting children learning process, the abundance of tasks, and others. (Aji, 2020)

Meanwhile, students must adapt to such a novel condition that drastic change of uncertainty may affect their mental state. In this situation, students are prone to unstable emotion because they have limited socialising access with friends and a monotone remote learning strategy. Maintaining students’ mental health and the ability to find positivity during crisis become a necessary effort.

Teachers play a role as students’ parents' in school to guide, teach and foster their potential. Taking a role as a parent in school will give a strong emotional connection between students and teachers. On the other hand, parents are in charge as well as a teacher when students come home. Every parent's action at home can influence students' behaviour and their learning process as parents are classified as the microsystem in human development ecology.

During this remote learning and studying from home, parents become unofficial teacher who will assure their children’s learning process. The facility and students’ emotional state should be concerned not to feel stressed and depressed. Stress in students can affect their health and education process.

Nurturing students’ resilience is a sustainable activity to maximise protective factors to have an excellent self-coping mechanism. (Public Health England, 2014) Unfortunately, connectedness between teacher and student may be faded as they are apart during home learning. Teachers face difficulty to teach and assess
directly how students behave at home. Therefore, it is a challenge for the family to support their children in developing their positive emotion and behaviour, particularly their resilience.

This research explores how a family can engage with schools to nurture students’ resilience during home learning and what family can do to nurture students’ resilience in the current COVID-19 pandemic. This research’s focus group age is primary students who need more guidance and assisting in their learning. This finding may benefit many schools and communities to raise awareness and promote the importance of students’ wellbeing and resilience.

Family Engagement

Family and parents’ engagement term in Education is used interchangeably with family involvement due to its similarity in supporting children’s learning performance. The word family in this research refers to parents and children’s carers at home who assist students learning at home. A broad definition of family engagement is considered the sort of activities such as partnerships between family members, schools and communities, raising a sense of responsibility and awareness regarding the importance of being engaged with children’s education, and delivering them some competencies and knowledge to do so. (Heather B. Weiss, 2009) (San Redding, 2011). The term involvement is the popular term for parents’ activities in school, such as volunteering and counselling, while the engagement term is widely used for a more comprehensive one. (Lance Emerson, 2012). In this article, family engagement is defined as a broad range of family members’ activities supporting students’ better performance and attainment.

"Mother is the first school. If she is righteous, the progeny becomes righteous." (Najmi, 2002)

Islam emphasises the mother as the first school of children. Mother introduces the world to her child with love and affection. Children will observe their parents’ behaviour and imitate them, which is in line with children cognitive development at stage sensory-motor and preoperational. (Syah, 2003) When children at the stage of concrete-operational, a more complex education system in school will accommodate their learning needs. Do family and parents still matter in children’s education while the school provides comprehensive educational services?

Yes. Education in school will enable students to learn and enhance their skills. Once they return home, the education process is in parents and family’s control. Students spend more time at home with their family and friends than students at school. For example, in Indonesia, students start to learn around 07.00 and return to their home at around 12.00. It means that students only spend around 5 hours on education in school and 19 hours outside the school. This timetable is quite similar to Finland first grade schools with an hour difference. They spend approximately 4 hours in schools, including break and lunchtime. Therefore, we cannot give the whole responsibility of children’s education only to school and teachers. Parents’ engagement and involvement in the learning process will complete education intervention for children. At home, the family can create an ‘education climate’ that enable students to feel excited and keen to learn. That is to say, family plays many roles in children’s education, including students’ first teacher, supporters of education, decision-makers, and active community members. (Anne T. Henderson, 2002) (National Education Association, 2012).

Parents play a crucial role in family engagement as they have more dominant control over their children than students’ siblings, grandparents, and caregivers. There are six types
of parents involvement in elementary school: parenting, communicating, supporting the school, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. These efforts showed an evidence-based effect on better students’ performance at school, including their grades, attendance, participation, confidence, and improved skills. (Anne T. Henderson, 2002) (Jacyntha Krakauer, 2017) (Lance Emerson, 2012)

Parenting may become the leader of the other five features of the parents’ involvement. It is easy to classify parenting behaviour into four categories with different level of warmth and control. The first one is those parents with a high rate on their warmth and control over their children. This parenting style is classified as an authoritative parenting style that is considered optimal for children development. The other three parenting style’s effectiveness is below the Authoritative one. When parents have high on control but low on warmth, their parenting style is authoritarian.

On the contrary, it is a permissive parenting behaviour if they have a low mark in control but show a significantly high warmth. The least effective one goes to a neglectful parenting style that is when the parents did not put much concern to provide warmth and control to their children. (Mackay, 2003) This parenting behaviour can be described in figure 1.

Family engagement shows that parent is not the only person in charge of children’s education in the home. Grandparents, siblings, caregivers, and other family members who live around children daily are part of this involvement. The more time children spend time with them, the more experiences children have with them. That is to say that family engagement promotes a sharing responsibility and understanding that education is everyone’s obligation.

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Figure 1. Parenting Behaviour

Education is a more complex process than not only focus on achieving high grades in school. It is a process in which children can develop their potential and skills and shape their behaviour. While schools tend to explicitly concern students’ cognitive development and psychomotor skills, a family has a more significant opportunity to shape children’s positive behaviour and personality daily.

For this kind of engagement, parents and school should discuss an organised plan for how parents and family should involve in learning. This plan must include parents’ input in shaping school-level policies, shared responsibility for bolstering students’ performance. (Oliver C. Moles, 2011) To design such a program, Joanna Smith et al. suggests seven essential principles of family engagement derived from evidence-based research: preparation, respect, specific, strategic, flexibility, creativity, and collaboration between parties. Good preparation will give both parties more time to understand the school’s education and learning system. This preparation should
include the equity virtue for all students, which will convey respect to each other. The specific family engagement in school will help parents and all family members decide what they need to do to encourage students' learning and personality development. Flexibility in the program will enable more family member to involve in students' learning process. With this flexibility, principals, schools, and families can demonstrate their creativity to arrange family engagement and home activities to help students learn. That is to say, the collaboration between family and school will happen. (Joanna Smith, 2009)

Nurturing Students' Resilience

Resilience is widely known as the human's capacity to bounce back from adversity, even though some writers expand the meaning of resilience from 'bouncing back' into specific abilities that accommodate children's disturbance in the future. Critical thinking, problem-solving, empathy, communication, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and sense of responsibility are examples of resilience traits. (Mahboubeh Asgari, 2017)

There is no absolute definition of this term that sometimes it is defined as either too broad or too narrow. Russell offered the philosophical meaning of resilience as the human virtue expressed in adapting with positivity to hardship emerging in their life. Resilience is a virtue that is more complex than individuals' simple traits. It is a virtue that was expressed as repertoire and the result of overtime action. (Russell, 2015) It means that continuous activities such as experience, habits, training, education, and a pleasing environment will foster resilience. Malcolm Hill and colleagues classified resilience into two main things: a significant threat and positive adaptation. The adversity may emerge from several sources such as individual factor, intrafamilial problems and external factors. (Malcolm Hill, 2007)

As a professional institution working on improving students' potential and skills, schools are the proper place to promote students' resilience. From Skinner and Vygotsky's viewpoint, resilience can be socially and culturally constructed, requiring constant interaction with others (Rosana Angstt Pasqualotto, 2015). The school acts as the trial and error learning 'box' where the students may make a mistake, face difficulty, and then find its solution.

Struggle to bolster students' resilience can be focused on three actions. First, risk-focused can be accomplished to reduce and avoid stressor in life. This is somehow more challenging than the second one because it is hard to portray what will happen in the future. Meanwhile, the second is asset-focused. This strategy fosters resilience asset and attributes in children's internal self. Such assets can be a weapon to fight against disturbance. Third, a process-focused strategy emphasises assisting students during adversity and helps them restore and harness. (Julie Ernst, 2018)

The characteristic of resilience can be bolstered during the learning associated with nature, nurture, and play. (Luke Harrison, 2017) Students are born with particular potential that is known as their nature or given the ability from heredity. Their environment, such as family, friends, society, and schools, can nurture students' resilience through organised actions. The term play in this resilience formula refers to children's needs to experience the freedom to play with their surroundings. Getting to know others and nature will benefit their social ability and self-recovery.

Principles of resilience building: accessible and available, effective negotiation, system, coordination, continuous support, relevant, shared responsibility (Ungar, 2018). Such principles will drive the learning process to some extent that empowers students to overcome
adversity. The strategy may be adjusted to students’ needs and situation. It means that strategy to foster resilience may differ at one school from another. Building a resilience strategy can decrease or prevent the disturbance and strengthen the bounce back’s ability, known as risk and protective factors. (Sila ŞAHİN, 2018)

As part of student’s lives, the family has a broader chance of becoming the resource of students’ resilience. They can provide adequate health and mental care for their children. As part of family belief, optimism can equip students with a proper strategy to deal with the problem. Children can overcome difficulties with support and empowerment from their family and environment (Ike Herdiana, 2017). This knowledge and belief system will drive students’ behaviour and capacity towards adversity. This will work well if parents and family understand the principles of resilience building. (Walsh, 1996) Therefore, the family cannot work alone. The engagement between family and experts becomes more crucial to indicate the proper program and strategy in a resilient building.

One of the significant indicators of resilience is the adversity itself. People can be assumed to have a high resilience if they can adapt and transform to a certain self-system when a challenge occurs. We cannot say someone is resilient even though he does not show any psychopathology or adverse action when there no disturbance triggers him. If we refer to Russel’s definition of resilience, more favourable value and action will be released even during hardship. The ability to alter adverse events into positive meaning is the main issue why resilience is essential. This positive thought can optimise people’s potential and creativity.

Remote Learning

The shift from a traditional classroom setting into distance learning expand the access of learning for students. More students can participate in distance learning without the needs to go to schools. Without mobility to school, students save longer time and cost. (Limitations, 2019)Remote learning is the education process where teachers and their students are apart. It has a similar definition of distance learning. This physical separation of students and educators creates a new face of learning that is opened, massive, and accessible in a specific time and place. Due to technology advances, communication between students and teachers may occur in multi ways. However, these multi strategies of communication during remote learning also depend on the facility itself. (Syakih, 2018)

In the initial year of 2020, Indonesia governance alerted school closures to reduce the outbreak of COVID-19. Then remote learning became the solution to provide safe education services from home. Several techniques were applied to adjust the learning process from school to home-based. It is challenging that teachers and schools consider every students’ family background and capacity because remote learning requires a gadget and internet network as the learning media. (Ali, 2020)

Ministry of Education released home learning guidance that emphasised support for children to survive and avoid the virus. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020)

Remote learning can be applied in two ways, online learning and offline learning. Online learning will enable students to interact with teachers via like zoom, google meet, skype, and other platforms. Students can learn through Learning Management System (LMS) provided by school and communities during online learning. Such LMS required more time and manual itself to access and learning through it. (Winarno, 2013) (Leontyeva, 2018). It is then very crucial to select the media that can be
reached by all students (Hanover Research, 2011).

Student participation can be affected by the different pedagogical practices used in home learning.

a. Lecture/didactic learning: Students become passive participants that accept the learning from the teacher as the resource and instructor.

b. Student-driven learning: This strategy will allow students to explore their critical thinking skills and problem-solving as part of their independent learning with an immediate approach from teachers.

c. Interactive or two-way learning: In this learning practice, students and teachers learn together and get lessons from each other (Dana Chambers, 2020).

Remote learning requires detailed guidance on a learning process and evaluation itself. Teachers, students, and parents should be well-prepared to work with the specific learning platform. There are three keys as the consideration to employ distance learning. The learning content should include the standard curriculum, enhance students’ cognitive skills, and help students deal with the crisis. Knowing how students learn at home and their environment will enable teachers to choose the suitable platform and strategy. Family support plays a significant role in distance learning. This kind of support will effectively be applied with guidance and empowerment from schools and teachers (Anne Tan-Choi, 2020).

**Method**

This research employs qualitative research methodology to explore deeper information and meaning about human’s behaviour and the system surrounding them. This research’s variables are family engagement during remote learning in B’s Elementary Islamic Lab-School and their effort to nurture resilience. Qualitative method and data are required because the research variables cannot be easily measured by the quantitative method, such as exploring what is happening in the field and how individuals can express and demonstrate what they aim to do. (Creswell, 2013) This method’s approach is a retrospective case study approach that analyses a case or an event descriptively and entails current findings regarding research variables, observation of home learning, and interview. (Mohajan, 2018). This research aims to analyse how family engage in home learning to nurture students’ resilience, so the qualitative and case study approach is likely the most proper to find the answer to this research question.

Located in Cirende, B’s Elementary Islamic Lab school was the observed school in this research. The process of home learning that had been observed ranges from class 1-6 with varied subjects. 6 classes were observed during 2 weeks of remote learning specifically 1 class for each grade. The headmaster and head of education department were interviewed to explore school’s policy and system of family engagement in learning process.

After getting the raw data from observation and interview, this research follows the data analysis step starting from the organisation, perusal, classification until synthesis for the final report.

**Results and Discussion**

The remote learning in B’s Elementary Islamic Labshool started in April 2020. The difference between conventional learning at school and remote learning is that teachers shortened the learning period via zoom because they considered the early age of students and limited their screen time. They applied the Montessori learning method with a modified
lesson plan and exercise sheet. Teachers mainly used three media to conduct remote learning, including WhatsApp group, google classroom, and zoom. The learning period was 40 minutes for each zoom class and 15 minutes break before studying the next subject.

Before the remote learning started, B’s school provided a seminar for parents and family with a paediatrician and child psychologist speaker. This seminar explained and helped family know what they can do in their own home to improve students’ learning process and cope with stress factors during the pandemic.

Family in-home would make sure how their children can learn effectively. They helped students preparing the media like laptop, gadget, stationery, and exercise sheet. Students do not have to buy the book; all the materials and tasks were provided by the teacher daily according to which output they needed to achieve. In the second grade, about four students were accompanied by their parents and siblings during remote learning. They assisted students to follow the instruction like reading the text and writing the assignment. Some students sometimes distracted by the noise in their own home, so they would not focus on what the teacher explained.

It is essential to have a systemic perspective to help individual increase their resilience. Human, as social being, have a chain relationship that can influence each other. That is to say that an individual can affect one’s development and vice versa. Such a systemic viewpoint will guide us to outline the practical program of nurturing resilience and involve other parties as part of the system.

The family will more actively participate in supporting students’ education during remote learning. The process itself requires the family to ensure facility and prepared situation so students can study well. This kind of engagement in B’s Elementary School is described as the triangle education process consists of teachers, students and parents, see figure 2.

![Figure 2. Triangle Education Cycle](image)

In the beginning semester, teachers in B’s Elementary School arranged a lesson and learning plan that employs Montessori, inquiry, and active learning. This school’s curriculum is taken from the integration of Islamic education, national curriculum and Cambridge curriculum. B’s Elementary school tends to omit regular homework to have free time to play and explore their environment. The activity called ‘Learning with Parents’ is taken routinely so that this program aims to let students feel that parents and families willingly help them learn to respect their parents and respect their teacher.

B’s Islamic School maintains the same learning schedule for current home learning and adjusts it into proper screen time. Zoom and Google meet are the main media of home learning, where the students and teachers can interact. The uniformity of home learning techniques in B’s school allows parents to access and control students’ learning process easily. B’s school is committed to providing a complex learning strategy to enhance yet simple media choices accessible for every student and parents.

Before home learning started, schools conducted a parenting seminar to explain how parents and families can help students during home learning. One of the seminar’s ultimate message is that psycho-educational care needed to be implemented to prevent stressful events during this pandemic. During home learning, parents should ensure that their children can
learn in a fun and exciting way. Children will quickly learn from the concrete example that they see at home. Therefore, parents should avoid negative behaviour such as yelling, bullying, and other violent actions, either by mean or unintentionally. Those harmful activities will result in unexpected students response and consequences.

Notably, family engagement during home learning in Bnayya Elementary School is described according to 7 types of family engagement below:

Parenting

Parents discuss their expectations about their children’s education with teachers. This discussion will help teachers to adjust the learning strategy with students’ needs. During home learning, B’s Elementary School aids parents and families with skills and knowledge regarding practical home learning through parenting seminar. As a result, parents know how to facilitate students learning with proper gadget and media at home.

Communicating

Communication between schools and parents became crucial during current home learning. Teachers routinely report students’ performance to parents and give feedback for subsequent learning. Parents are used to reaching to teachers quickly via Whatsapp. The academic program was explained well in the Whatsapp group so that communication still occurs even though with limited direct interaction due to Pandemic.

Supporting School

B’s Elementary School provides professional support for parents to be involved at the school’s teaching and learning activities. Parents attend parenting seminar as part of their participation in supporting school program.

Learning at Home

During this outbreak crisis, learning at home became the main activity for children to learn. Even though the learning process occurs at home, teachers do not leave students to learn by themselves without detailed procedures and observation. Parents become the facilitator that helps students prepare the equipment for learning. Time management is the crucial key of this home learning to enhance their ability in time management and discipline. Such action needs parents attention to patiently remind students to learn on time. They meet their students via zoom and google meet daily. The screentime is adjusted to students’ physical and cognitive development. Class 1-3 can do face time for 30 minutes and take a break after 15 minutes before continuing to the next virtual class. Meeting with teachers and friends has helped students express their emotion and interact with each other.

Decision making

B’s elementary school let parents participate in each decision making for the academic program. Parents suggestion and ideas are essential to school’ policy as they understand the development and significant key to understand their children. For children with special needs, teachers will conduct assessment and consultation with student’s parents, doctor, or caregiver to discuss students’ needs and proper intervention.

Collaborating with Community

In B’s Elementary school, parents or students’ guardian becomes a member of
the school itself. This community aims to create a synergy and collaboration supporting students’ educational needs both in schools and homes.

With the seven family engagement activities above, children felt motivated as many parties encourage their learning process. Empowerment is one of the essential value to bolster students’ resilience.

B’s Elementary school implicitly employs Principles of resilience-building both in the classroom setting and during home learning. Parents can access the school’s helpdesk easily to find help for their children. Every parent has ‘Buku Hubung’ or a book of connection with teachers. This book is a written report about students’ personal development and issues in school. This documentation was beneficial to record the resilience of student development. School considers all staff, teachers, parents and students as the big family, so they have a friendly relationship. This strong bonding may support good coordination between school and family in resilience building. See figure 3.

Figure 3 Family Engagement to Nurture Students Resilience During Remote Learning

Teaching students of an elementary school in the era of Industrial revolution 4.0, teachers and parents must provide relevant support and learning methods that can boost their potential, particularly in technology. Students from the Alpha generation has a particular characteristic that is familiar with the technology. It can be a challenge for children to improve their skills in accessing technology. On the contrary, if schools and teachers do not positively nurture students’ technology literacy, students can either be left behind or controlled by technology itself, such as nomophobia and addiction to games and social media. The clear responsibility in learning created an excellent collaboration between family and teachers. Overall, family engagement means nothing without strong connectedness with schools.

Conclusions

During the crisis of pandemic and adversity in life, resilience becomes an essential asset for students to thrive and learn effectively. The family’s presence and involvement during the home learning gave the children warmth and external motivation because they felt supported.

B’s school supported good parenting in learning process especially during remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Seminars and routine communication between parties are parts of synergy to provide an effective education fostering students’ resilience. The teacher’s daily observation and assessment were delivered to each parents followed by further intervention based on their discussion showing parents’ role in decision making. Teacher’s daily observation will be combined with family’s observation about students’ resilience and personality development at home.

During the process of remote learning, family can engage in students' resilience-building by supporting their children's learning activities such as direct assisting and facilitating. Only few parents, particularly those with slow learner students, were found accompanying their
children in a video conference. Their intervention was mostly conducted in pre and post-learning process, while teachers concerned on delivering indirect resilience value during learning and teaching progress.

The diversity in students may lead to different strategies to build their resilience. The limitation of this study is the focus on the strategy and progress of resilience building and does not examine its effectiveness. Further research about the result of this resilience-building is needed to explore this study’s effectiveness. More complex research will complete this study as the educational setting’s policy consideration promoting resilience in students.

References


