

Social Support in Determining Coping Strategies Among Adolescents in Urban City: Evidence from Post COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The process of life has changed in the post-pandemic COVID-19 era, including in the educational setting of schools. This condition has an impact on adolescents who tend to struggle in determining effective coping strategies. Adolescents require a lot of support in resolving their chosen coping strategies.

Objectives: This research aims to explain the relationship between social support and coping strategies among adolescents in the post-pandemic COVID-19 era.

Methods: This research used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. The research sample consists of 11th-grade students attending schools in the urban city, with 224 respondents. The sampling technique used in this study is random sampling. The correlation between social support and coping strategies is analyzed using the Chi-square test with normally distributed data.

Results: This research indicates a relationship between social support and coping strategies adolescents use during the learning process in Tangerang (p -value < 0.05).

Conclusions: Adolescents with low social support tend to use problem-focused coping strategies, while the majority of adolescents with high social support tend to use emotion-focused coping strategies. This study recommends interventions for adolescent groups to determine appropriate coping strategies when experiencing stress.

Introduction

Adolescence is critical in shaping self-identity, character, and social skills. This transitional stage is often marked by various challenges, including academic pressures, social relationships, and psychological stress (Soto et al., 2022). These challenges are amplified in urban environments by fierce competition, rapid environmental shifts, and limited family interaction. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of adolescents, as restricted social engagements have increased the likelihood of mental health concerns, including stress, anxiety, and social isolation (Ren & Guo, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has led the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia to implement distance learning systems across all educational segments due to the pandemic in Indonesia (Fitriasari et al., 2020). After controlling the pandemic, the learning



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system will revert to outdoor activities and face-to-face interactions. The change in learning methods has impacted students' psychological well-being, causing stress during classes and lectures.

Despite the challenges, students have shown remarkable resilience in adapting their learning patterns to the demands of the academic environment. Adolescents have been able to navigate the long and different study hours, albeit with some difficulty, and seek help managing their study time effectively (Tuasikal & Retnowati, 2019). Research by Tuasikal and Retnowati also indicates that while 24.8% of students experience moderate stress and 7.9% are severely stressed, they are actively seeking coping strategies to address their stress issues. However, preliminary studies show that 40% of students have maladaptive coping strategies.

The challenges faced by adolescents have continued since the post-pandemic period of COVID-19. Studies show an increase in mental and social health issues among adolescents, manifested in anxiety, depression, and difficulty controlling emotions even after the COVID-19 pandemic (Kathirvel N., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic caused changes in social interactions among adolescents, including communication with peers, family, and teachers at school. Previous research has highlighted the importance of social interaction with peers and family in reducing anxiety and depression (Twenge et al., 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic poses a risk of psychosocial disorders in adolescents due to limited interactions. Therefore, coping strategies are needed to address the issues that arose in the post-COVID-19 period.

Coping strategies encompass various efforts to control, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful situations or events (Fitriasari et al., 2020). Based on the concept, there are two types of coping strategies: problem-solving coping and emotion-focused coping. Adolescents can take active steps to find alternative problem-solving solutions by eliminating conditions or situations that cause stress in problem-solving coping strategies. In emotion-focused coping, adolescents try to regulate their emotions to adapt to the impacts caused by stressful conditions (Fitriasari et al., 2020).

Coping strategies can include problem-focused approaches such as problem-solving planning and seeking social support. The role of social support in enhancing students' learning motivation is crucial. It refers to the attention, comfort, appreciation, or assistance individuals receive from teachers, peers, parents, and other influential figures (Defitri et al., 2021). Research findings also indicate that promoting positive social interactions in schools can reduce students' anxiety post-COVID-19 pandemic (Ni & Jia, 2023). This phenomenon forms the basis for this research, which aims to identify the relationship between social support and coping strategies employed by adolescent groups in response to changes in the post-COVID-19 learning system in urban areas.

Methods

Study Design

This research utilized a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional method, a type of study that emphasizes measuring/observing only once at a time (Nursalam, 2008). This research was conducted from April to August 2022 in the urban city of Tangerang.

Population, Samples, and Sampling

The sampling technique in this study was random sampling. The population in the research was 509 adolescents, but through sampling calculations, it amounted to 224 respondents. The inclusion criteria for this study were adolescents attending school in urban Tangerang and the eleventh grade. The exclusion criteria were adolescents currently engaged in field practice for college. The independent variable in this research is social support, while the dependent variable



is coping strategies. Social support refers to tangible support in the form of attention, appreciation, and comfort provided by individuals around an individual to enhance their well-being by feeling comfortable. Coping strategies are ways of dealing with stressors through problem-solving and emotion-focused coping.

Instruments

Based on previous research, the social support questionnaire is valid with a range of values from 0.207 to 0.579. The social support instrument uses a questionnaire developed by (Putri, 2021). Meanwhile, the coping strategy questionnaire with 50 questions is considered valid with a value of 0.883. The questionnaire was accurate if the critical value (r -table) at a significance level of ≤ 0.05 from 10 respondents is more significant than 0.514, indicating that the 50 items are valid. The research instrument for this variable utilizes the results of (Dwiko Nur Gunawan, 2019). According to previous researchers, the reliability test results for the social support variable yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78, indicating a high degree of reliability. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 was obtained for the coping strategy variable, indicating high reliability.

Data Analysis

The correlation between social support and coping strategies is analyzed using the Chi-square test with normally distributed data. The scoring assessment for the social support variable is low (≤ 30) and high (>30) (Putri, 2021). The scoring assessment for the coping strategy variable is based on problem-solving coping (<159) and emotion-focused coping (>159) criteria (Dwiko Nur Gunawan, 2019).

Results

Table 1. Characteristics of Adolescents in Urban City (n= 224)

Variable	n	(%)
Age		
15	71	31.7
16	144	64.3
17	9	4.0
Sex		
Men	79	35.3
Women	145	64.7
Social Support		
Low	146	65.2
High	78	34.8
Coping Strategy		
EFC (Emotion-focused coping)	116	51.8
PFC (Problem-focused coping)	108	48.2

Based on Table 1, most respondents are 16 years old (64.3%). In terms of gender, the majority of respondents are female (64.7%). Most respondents have low social support (65.2%). The coping strategy most commonly used is Emotion-Focused Coping (EFC) at 50.2%, which involves ignoring perceived feelings, expressing frustration to others, and keeping problems to oneself. The process to ensure the level of respondent homogeneity involves defining explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria. The homogeneity test results indicate a p -value > 0.05 .



Table 2. Social Support in Determining Coping Strategies Among Adolescents in Urban City (n = 224)

Social Support	Coping Strategy		Total	p-value
	EFC (%)	PFC (%)		
Low	63 (43.2)	83 (56.8)	146	0.000
High	53 (67.9)	25 (32.1)	78	

The bivariate analysis results in Table 2 show a relationship between social support and coping strategies (p -value < 0.05). Most respondents (56.8%) with low social support use Problem-Focused Coping (PFC) strategies. Meanwhile, most respondents with high social support use Emotion-Focused Coping (EFC) strategies.

Discussion

Adolescents experience rapid and significant changes, often reaching their peak, accompanied by emotional imbalances and instability in many aspects during this stage of life (Defitri et al., 2021). The results indicate that the majority of respondents have low social support. This consistent result found that 31 (81.4%) had low social support (Raharjayanti, 2019). This finding aligns with research at SMA X Yogyakarta, which found that 83.51% had low social support and 16.49% had high social support (Refi, 2019). Students need to receive social support; the presence of social support will positively impact their mental health and quality of life.

Most respondents used coping strategies focused on Emotion-Focused Coping more than those focused on Problem-Focused Coping. This finding aligns with a study that showed that 58.2% of students used emotion-focused coping strategies, while 41.8% used problem-focused coping strategies (Aris, Sarfika, and Erwina, 2019). This result indicates that despite having limited social support, some adolescents still make proactive efforts to manage the stress they face. Adolescents who adopt Emotion-Focused Coping (EFC) strategies warrant attention, as these strategies tend to be less effective, such as ignoring emotions, venting frustrations to others, or internalizing problems (Vucenovic et al., 2023).

Additionally, the results of a study showed that emotion-focused coping contributed to a more significant percentage than problem-focused coping. Each individual's coping strategy will vary depending on the type of stressor, stress response, and inherent stress levels. Adolescents with high social support are more likely to use Emotion-Focused Coping strategies. Although this may seem contradictory, it reflects a reliance on emotional support and reinforcement provided by their surrounding support network, enabling them to be more open in processing their feelings. In contrast, adolescents with low social support tend to employ Problem-Focused Coping strategies, which may be influenced by the lack of external assistance, forcing them to manage stress independently.

The study results provide valuable insights into the relationship between social support and academic stress coping and offer practical implications for educators and researchers (Putri, 2021). The finding means that by providing high social support, educators can help reduce the academic stress experienced by students. Conversely, a lack of social support can lead to increased academic stress. There is a relationship between social support and student learning motivation in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pratiwi, 2019). This indicates that higher social support can significantly boost student learning motivation. Coping stress and social support contribute effectively to adolescent learning motivation, emphasizing the importance of social support in academic settings.



The study results are particularly relevant in the current context of online learning and the COVID-19 pandemic (Defitri et al., 2021). The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between peer social support and coping with online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding underscores the importance of peer support in the unique challenges online learning poses, providing valuable insight for educators and researchers.

The students who receive high social support can effectively reduce academic stress (Andarini et al., 2020). Social support is the interpretation of the availability of supportive resources that play a role in symptoms and stress events (Triwahyuni et al., 2021). Social support can indirectly influence coping strategies, emphasizing its significance in student well-being and academic success.

This study has limitations in correlational design between variables. It cannot determine the extent of the influence of social support on the selection of coping strategies in problem-focused and emotion-focused coping because this study utilizes a cross-sectional rather than quasi-experimental approach.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate a relationship between social support and coping strategies among adolescents in urban areas. The majority of respondents still have low social support. The dominant coping strategy used by respondents is emotion-based coping when facing problems. Therefore, schools must regularly provide promotion and stress level assessments in the learning process. The future is that students can maintain appropriate coping mechanisms and change their strategies. This research also recommends that families provide social support to adolescents in their learning process.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

In this research, an Ethical Review was conducted by the ethics committee on August 2, 2022, at the Faculty of Medicine and Health, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, with Ethical No: 181/PE/KE/FKK-UMJ/VIII/2022.

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