

Anxiety and Attitudes of Elementary School Children after Facing Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

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Background: Covid-19 is a pandemic detected at the end of 2019 that causes people of all ages feeling anxious, including school-age children. This anxiety may cause changes in children's attitudes and behaviors to maintain health after the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic that has hit all parts of the world, both developed and developing countries, has not entirely ended. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has become a concern for everyone, including school-age children, as it may cause anxiety. Anxiety that occurs continuously can cause stress to depression.

Objective: This study aimed to determine the relationship between anxiety and the attitude of elementary school children after facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

Methods: This study utilized descriptive correlation with a cross-sectional study approach. The study employed total sampling techniques, which included school-age children accounted for 70 respondents.

Results: Of 70 respondents, 11 respondents (15.7%) experienced anxiety, while 59 people (84.3%) were not anxious. Of those respondents, 7 respondents (10.0%) had a negative attitude, while the remaining 63 respondents (90.0%) had a positive attitude. Respondents with no anxiety and negative attitudes amounted to 7 people (11.9%), while those who were not anxious and had a positive attitude amounted to 52 people (88.1%). The Chi-square test with the alternative Fisher Exact test resulted in a p-value= 0.285. This means that there is no relationship between anxiety and the attitude of elementary school children after facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conclusion: Anxiety has no correlation with attitude in elementary school children after facing Covid-9 pandemic.

Keywords: anxiety; attitude; children; covid-19; elementary school children

Introduction

In recent years, all parts of the world have been affected by Corona Virus Disease-19 (Covid-19). The disease was first reported in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, and on January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global health emergency. A disease whose transmission is through droplets caused by Novel Corona Virus Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), in most cases, causes mild symptoms, such as dry cough, flu, and fever, and can cause acute respiratory distress and be fatal (Sohrabi et al., 2020). Coexisting with Covid-19 is a phase of concern for everyone, including school-age children. This pandemic has caused anxiety and fear. Anxiety that occurs continuously can cause stress to depression (Budiastuti, 2021).

Based on global data, around 463 million children, or around 31% of children, are affected by Covid-19, and they have difficulty accessing distance learning when schools are closed due to Covid-19. About 10% of them feel anxious and afraid due to not being able to receive proper access to education. This pandemic caused school closures to reach nearly 1.5 billion. Pandemic conditions that require distance learning caused many obstacles for children because of various factors, such as supporting devices at home, the obligation to do home tasks, and a less conducive environment that can cause fear and anxiety to children because it will have an impact on the academic scores (UNICEF, 2020).

Children aged 6 to 14 years have been diagnosed with anxiety and about 3.2% in the same age group are diagnosed with depression (Setyo et al., 2021). In Indonesia, the community, especially children who are in school, the level of worry and anxiety due to the Covid-19 pandemic experienced is clearly implied. Around 80 million children in Indonesia, 30% of whom have the potential to experience serious impacts both in the short and long term. Various temporarily paralyzed activities that were felt at the beginning of the pandemic until now have resulted in feelings of panic and anxiety. In accordance with a survey conducted by the Indonesian Association of Mental Medicine Specialists (PDSKJI) regarding mental health of 1,552 respondents with three psychological problems; Anxious, depressed, and traumatized, as many as 63 respondents experienced anxiety and 66% experienced depression due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, in the South Sulawesi Province, in 2019, about 17.86% of cases experienced mental disorders due to Covid-19 (Lindasari et al., 2021).

After facing the Covid-19 pandemic, it has had a lot of impact on every aspect of life, including social, biological, physiological, spiritual, and emotional aspects. Changes in emotions consisted of fear, anxiety, and worry about something children in school felt after Covid-19. Children feel anxious when they start to return to face-to-face learning. Children worry about decreased academic achievement when shifting from online to face-to-face learning. Children feel anxious to socialize with people around them both with teachers and everyone in the school due to stigma and habits of limiting activities and being in a crowded environment (Zaluchu, 2021). The return of children to face-to-face learning in schools makes them worried and anxious. One of the reasons is that they do assignments alone without parental assistance at school. They are worried this condition might impact their academic grades. After the Covid-19 pandemic, children are expected to maintain health protocols, but in reality, after Covid-19, students do not maintain health with health protocols (Zaluchu, 2021). Anxiety in children affects attitudes that tend to be negative caused by lack of knowledge about information about post-Covid-19 pandemic conditions, as well as negative stigma from children about the dangers of Covid-19 which will have an impact on children's psyche until they are adults (Zaharah et al., 2020).

Based on the background above, the authors were interested in examining the relationship between anxiety and the attitude of elementary school children after facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

Methods

Study Design

This research design is a descriptive correlation to determine the relationship between two variables using a cross-sectional study approach.

Samples/Participants

The population of this study was all students in grade V and VI at public elementary school 199 Arasoe, Cina District, Bone Regency. The sample in this study was grade V and VI students, with a total 70 respondents. The sampling technique utilized total sampling. The inclusion criteria included: 1) students in grades V and VI who agreed to participate in the study; 2) students who completed the questionnaire. The exclusion criteria included students who did not complete the questioners.

Instruments

The measurement instrument used in this study consisted of three instruments, including observation sheet for demographic data, anxiety questionnaires, and questionnaires about attitudes. Demographic data consisted of name, gender and age, personal history of suffering from Covid-19, and sources of information about Covid-19. The measurement of child anxiety was carried out using the RCMAS questionnaire adopted from the previous study. This questionnaire consisted of 28 items using the Guttman scale, which consisted of two answer choices: yes (score 1) and no (score 0). The respondents were categorized as not anxious if the score was 0-19 and categorized as anxious if the score was 20-28.

The attitude of children was measured using an attitude questionnaire with Cronbach's alpha 0.775 (Zaluchu, 2021). This questionnaire consisted of 10 statement items (6 positive statements on question number items and 4 negative statements), using a Likert scale. Likert scale is a research scale used to measure a person's attitude or opinion and perception of events or symptoms (Putri, 2021). Attitude measurement consisted of positive and negative statements. Positive statements consisted of a strongly agree (SS) score of 5, agree (S) score of 4, doubt score of 3, disagree (TS) score of 2, and strongly disagree (STS) score of 1. Negative statements consist of strongly agree (SS) score 1, agree (S) score 2, doubt score 3, disagree (TS) score 4, and strongly disagree (STS) score 5. A positive attitude if the final score ≥ 30 and a negative attitude if the score ≤ 30 .

Data Collection

This study was conducted in 2022 at public elementary school 199 Arasoe, Cina District, Bone Regency. Data collection was carried out by researchers with directly distributing research questionnaire sheets to be filled out by each respondent. Respondents were previously explained each statement item on the questionnaire sheet and providing opportunities for respondents to ask points that needed to be clarified. Furthermore, the questioner was filled out by respondents, then questionnaires were collected after the data of each question was filled.

Data Analysis

All data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the participants' characteristics. Univariate analysis is an analysis carried out to describe the characteristics of each research variable. Each answer category on the independent variable and the dependent variable is presented in the form of a frequency distribution table and then analyzed (Notoatmojo, 2012). Bivariate analysis is an analysis carried out to determine the correlation, interaction, and influence of the two variables studied. The statistical test in this study was the Chi-square test using the Fisher Exact alternative test because there was an expected count value of < 5 with a meaning limit (α): 0.05 (5%), using the SPSS version 26 computer program.

Ethical Considerations

The research permit was issued by the ethics commission of the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, Mega Rezky University Makassar.

Results

Characteristics of respondents

Table 1 showed that most respondents were males, accounting for 40 (57.1%) people, aged 11 accounted for 45 (64.5%) people, in class VI accounted for 36 (51.4%), mostly never experienced covid-19 for 67 (95.7%) people and had knowledge resource about covid-19 from TV accounted for 38 (54.3%) respondents.

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents

Characteristics		n	%
Gender	Male	40	57,1
	Female	30	42,9
Age	10	17	24,3
	11	45	64,3
	12	8	11,4
Class	V (Five)	34	48,6
	VI (Six)	36	51,4
History of Covid-19	Ever	3	4,3
	Never	67	95,7

Resources	TV	38	54,3
About Covid-19	Newspaper	2	2,9
	HP	5	7,1
	TV, HP	23	32,9
	TV, Newspaper, HP	2	2,9

Source: Primary Data, 2022

Distribution of respondents' frequency based on anxiety and attitudes post-Covid-19 Pandemic

Table 2 showed that majority of respondents did not experience anxiety, accounted for 59 (84.3%). In addition, Table 3 depicted that out of 70 respondents there were 7 respondents (10.0%) expressed a negative attitude, while the remaining 63 (90.0%) had a positive attitude.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution based on Anxiety of Elementary School Children After Facing the Covid-19 Pandemic

	n	%
Anxious	11	15.7
No anxiety	59	84.3
Total	70	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2022

Table 3. Frequency Distribution Based on Attitudes of Elementary School Children After Facing the Covid-19 Pandemic

	n	%
Positive	63	90.0
Negative	7	10.0
Total	70	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2022

The relationship of anxiety with the child's attitude

Table 2 showed that of the 70 respondents, respondents who were not anxious and had a negative attitude were 7 respondents (11.9%), while those who were not anxious and had a positive attitude were 52 respondents (88.1%). The Chi-Square test with an alternative Fisher Exact test showed a p-value of 0.285. This means that there was no relationship between anxiety and the attitude of elementary school children after facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 2. The Relationship between Anxiety and Attitudes of Elementary School Children After Facing the Covid-19 Pandemic

Category	Attitude categories				Total	p value
	Negative		Positive			
	n	%	n	%	N	%
No Anxiety	7	11.9	52	88.1	59	100.0
Anxious	0	0.0	11	100.0	11	100.0
Total	7	10.0	63	90.0	70	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2022

Discussion

Anxiety can occur when an individual is faced with an unpleasant situation that causes unrest to the individual. Anxiety is defined as a feeling or emotional state that arises when a child is under stress and is characterized by feelings of tension, the mind makes worry accompanied by a physical response. Anxiety is a natural reaction and a necessary warning response so that it does not become a severe disorder when it is under control (Zalukhu, 2019). During the Covid-19 pandemic, children were required to limit all activities that have an impact on children's growth and development, such as restrictions on children playing with peers, maintaining distance, requiring masks, and always washing hands, school closures and online learning.

Covid-19 can increase anxiety in school-age children. This is in line with a study by Fitria & Ildil (2020) which suggested that children's anxiety levels during the pandemic were in the high category. Unlike the post-Covid-19 pandemic, as things gradually normal and children's activities return to normal, they do not show anxiety disorders in school-age children. This is in accordance with the findings in this study which shows that the majority of school children do not experience anxiety after facing the Covid-19 pandemic. This shows that school-age children are not vulnerable to anxiety after facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

The authors assume that the number of respondents who do not experience anxiety dominates those who experience anxiety because school-age children are still at their developmental stage in playing and interacting with their peers who are returning to normal after Covid-19 as usual. Therefore, they are not susceptible to experiencing anxiety after Covid-19. In addition, another factor that can affect anxiety experienced by individuals is age, where adults are more susceptible to anxiety than schoolchildren. This is because adults experience a lot of anxiety due to career demands, workload and professional life that are at stake after the Covid-19 pandemic. This is in agreement with a study by Rahayu & Wiryosutomo (2020), which found that adults experience more anxiety than school-age children. In addition, there are factors that can affect anxiety, such as knowledge. Knowledge influences behavior in responding to certain situations. This is supported by the theory of Sitohang & Simbolon (2021) explaining that the existence of knowledge, anxiety will be reduced because everyone's knowledge and experience can help solve psychological problems including anxiety (Danu et al., 2021).

This study shows that the majority of respondents have a positive attitude after facing the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of this study show that the attitude of elementary school children after facing Covid-19 is in the positive category. This is due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic making grade V and Class VI elementary school children maintain their attitude in responding to the pandemic by following recommended protocols from the government (Zalukhu, 2019). This study agrees with the theory by Notoatmojo that a person's attitude can be influenced by several factors such as age, education, and occupation. This can be proven from the results of this study which showed that out of 70 respondents, 63 of them had a positive attitude. Where another thing that influences it is from the factor of previous experience.

The authors assume that the number of respondents is dominated by positive attitudes because the Covid-19 pandemic that has occurred has stigmatized children about the importance of implementing health habits after the Covid-19 pandemic. This is in line with research conducted by Anhusadar & Islamiyah (2020) showing that the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the attitudes and behaviors to maintain health, such as frequently washing hands, and applying coughing and sneezing ethics. This has become a routine in the daily basis. A good attitude can be formed if individuals have sufficient knowledge of post-Covid-19 pandemic (Anhusadar, 2021).

This study shows that there is no relationship between anxiety and the attitude of elementary school children after facing the Covid-19 pandemic. This is in line with research conducted by Sintha (2016) regarding the relationship between anxiety levels and nurse attitudes in handling patient relapse, which found that there is no significant relationship between anxiety levels and nurse attitudes. This is in line with the previous study by Wawan and Dewi (2020), which affirms that attitude is a disposition to do or not do a certain behavior, so that attitude is not only a pure psychological internal condition of the individual, but attitude is more of a process of consciousness that is individual in nature. This means that this process

occurs subjectively and uniquely in each individual (Oramas et al., 2018). Several factors influence attitudes, including personal experience, culture, influence of others, religious institutions, and emotional factors. Between et al. (2018) revealed that age is one aspect that plays a role in a person's maturity level with increasing age there is a change in attitude in individuals to become more positive.

Anxiety in children due to Covid-19 can cause an uncooperative attitude. School-age children with normal physical development will be able to carry out physical activities by playing with peers and participating in various activities at school and in their environment. This means a child's physical development will affect his confidence and ability to socialize with friends (Widanti, 2017). This is related to the less anxiety experienced by children, the better the attitude caused. This is in line with research conducted by Suryaatmaja & Wulandari (2020) on the relationship between anxiety levels on adolescent attitudes due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Researchers assume that there is no relationship between anxiety and the attitude of elementary school children after facing the Covid-19 pandemic because after Covid-19 all activities of school-age children return to normal differently during the Covid pandemic where all children's activities are restricted; school closures, online learning, social distancing, mandatory health protocols, wearing masks and washing hands are different after Covid-1.

Conclusion

This study finds that the majority of elementary school children do not experience anxiety and the majority have a positive attitude after facing the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, studies show that there is no relationship between anxiety and the attitude of elementary school children after facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

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