

# THE RELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING IN DEAF ADOLESCENTS IN BOARDING SCHOOLS

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*Abstract-This study aims to determine the relation between social support and emotion-focused coping in Deaf adolescents in boarding schools. The research hypothesis shows that there is a negative and significant relation between social support and emotion-focused coping (distancing and escape-avoidance dimensions). The subjects in this study were 53 Deaf adolescents in boarding schools. The scales used were scale of social support (24 items,  $\alpha = 0.934$ ), scale of distancing dimension (6 items,  $\alpha = 0.735$ ), and scale of escape-avoidance dimension (6 items,  $\alpha = 0.791$ ) which were developed by the researcher. The data were analyzed by using the correlation test of Spearman rho because the data distribution is not normal. The results show that social support is negatively correlated with emotion-focused coping dimensions. The distancing dimension ( $r = -0.447$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and escape-avoidance dimension ( $r = -0.451$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ).*

Keywords: Social Support, Emotional-Focused Coping, Deaf Adolescents in Boarding Schools

## 1. Introduction

The term of people with hearing loss is considered as a necessity for Deaf people to optimize their hearing in various ways to resemble hearing individuals. In contrast to the term of people with hearing loss, which seems more discriminatory, the greeting and writing of Deaf with capital letter (D) is seen as having more of its own identity, language, and culture in a community group. It was stated by the Deaf Community in PSIBK (2018) which also concluded that the Deaf greeting was deemed more polite and more comfortable than people with hearing loss term. Therefore, in this study the researchers changed the term people with hearing loss to Deaf.

Deafness makes Deaf adolescents face problems that hinder their development process, such as cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral development (Somantri, 2007). The same thing was conveyed by Hayati and Elfida (2011) who stated that the inhibition of language development makes Deaf adolescents difficult to communicate with other people, so that they do not have the tools to develop their social, emotional, and intellectual aspects.

According to Calderon and Greenberg (2011), the inhibition of social-emotional development in Deaf adolescents is characterized by their attitudes that tend to show greater impulsivity and poorer regulation of emotions, and language development that is often delayed makes them have poor emotional language vocabulary. The inability to solve problems spontaneously with linguistic symbols and aspects of emotions that they feel is also one of the factors that causes a serious gap in social-emotional development for

some Deaf children (Feuerstein, in Calderon & Greenberg, 2011).

Emotional instability is often shown by individuals with deafness in the form of feelings of inferiority, irritability, and sensitivity (Moores, in Riahta, Hasanah, & Pratiwi, 2015). Unstable emotions tend to hinder their social relations because individuals with deafness tend to withdraw themselves from society, be suspicious, be lack of confidence, be reluctant to communicate and tend to avoid relation with non-Deaf people. The same thing was expressed by Gross (in Riahta et al., 2015) that individuals with deafness tend to have a variety of negative emotions such as withdrawal, suspicion, and irritability. These negative emotions trigger anger and attitudes of individuals with deafness to vent their emotions.

Marlina (2010) revealed that individuals who are able to manage their emotions tend to express positive emotions. Unlike individuals who tend to feel their emotions as pressure will express negative emotions. The emergence of negative emotions can be seen in children who live in school dormitories and away from their parents. Based on these exposures, this study focuses on Deaf adolescents in boarding schools.

Boarding schools can be interpreted as schools facilitated with a dormitory for residences that must be occupied by their students as well as a place to study for a certain period of time (Hendriyenti, 2014). Students who attend boarding schools must stay separate from parents and meet new people such as, fellow students, dormitory caregivers, and teachers in schools (Maslihah, 2011). The boarding school environment also requires the students to be

able to adapt themselves and it has the potential to be a stressful situation for them (Maslihah, 2011).

Meanwhile, the obstacles faced by Deaf adolescents themselves can create pressure (Makin & Lindley, 1994). In reducing this pressure, Deaf adolescents are required to find a way out of their problems and adjust themselves to the situation that are full of pressure and here the coping roles are very necessary.

Folkman, Lazarus, Schetter, DeLongis, and Gruen (1986) defined coping as a cognitive effort and individual behavior in managing external and internal demands between individuals and their environment which are considered to burden or exceed the individual's abilities. The concept of coping strategies according to Folkman et al., (1986) is multidimensional (Bouchard, Sabourin, Lussier, Wright, & Richer, 1997; Sorlie & Sexton, 2001).

Deaf adolescents in boarding schools can manage their negative emotions with emotion focused coping strategy. Folkman et al., (1986) defined emotion focused coping as an attempt by individuals to deal with problems or pressures in order to reduce the negative emotions. Individuals tend to use emotion focused coping when they have difficulties in controlling the problems they are facing, so that individuals try to regulate their emotions (Folkman et al., 1986). According to Folkman and Lazarus (in Davidson & Neale, 2012), individuals who use emotion focused coping strategy try to deal with their problems indirectly by diverting attention from problems, relaxing, or seeking comfort from others to reduce negative emotional reactions. The use of emotion focused coping can be seen when individuals are faced with a problem.

The research conducted by Evitasari, Widiyasavitri, and Herdiyanto (2015) shows that Deaf adolescents tend to create feelings of anxiety, escape and withdraw themselves from their social environment when facing a problem. According to Folkman et al. (1986), individuals who withdraw themselves from conditions that are considered as a source of pressure either by keeping a distance from a problem or avoiding the social environment can be concluded that the individuals tend to deal with their problems with emotion focused coping strategies, namely distancing and escape-avoidance coping. Some Deaf adolescents involved in interviews with researchers and accompanied by the teacher also said that some Deaf adolescents in boarding schools often show an attitude of distancing and avoiding friends who have problems with them.

According to Folkman and Lazarus (in Taylor, 1999), the distancing dimensions are reviewed based on individual efforts to maintain distance from the problems faced by breaking away or trying not to involve themselves in the problem. The escape-avoidance dimension is indicated by escaping or avoiding problems. Distancing and escape-avoidance coping are usually carried out by individuals when they are faced with conditions that must be accepted by them so as to enable them not to focus on the problem (Folkman et al., 1986).

This study also tries to identify variables that can contribute as risk factors to the emergence of distancing and escape-avoidance dimensions. Several factors that have the potential to influence the distancing and escape-avoidance dimensions are health and energy, positive beliefs, problem solving abilities, social skills, social support, and material resources (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). The assistance and social support obtained from people around both physically and psychologically are needed by Deaf adolescents. Social support is the existence, willingness, and care that Deaf adolescents get from people who can be relied on, appreciate and love them.

Situations where there are differences in social support received by individuals living in dormitories with individuals living with parents underlie the importance of social support variables in helping individuals, especially Deaf adolescents in boarding schools, to overcome obstacles and reduce perceived pressure. This is in line with Smet (in Tricahyani & Widiyasavitri, 2016) which revealed that individuals will find it easier to face pressure when getting support from the surrounding environment. Sarafino (2008) explained that social support can be obtained by individuals from family, friends, doctors, communities and organizations involved with individuals.

In this situation, Deaf adolescents in boarding schools get support from parents, friends, and teachers at school. The support can be emotional support, award support, information support, and real support (Rees & Hardy, 2000). As a psychological variable, social support can have a positive impact on the psychology of Deaf adolescents in boarding schools. Johnson and Johnson (in Adicondro & Purnamasari, 2011) explained the positive impact can increase productivity, psychological well-being and self-adaptation with feelings of belonging, gaining a clear identity, increasing self-esteem, improving individual physical health and helping individuals manage their stress or pressure.

Social support can give an effect on individuals to solve their problems. Individuals who get a lot of social support

will be easier to solve their problems, otherwise the absence of social support affects individuals to be unable to solve their problems. This is because individuals cannot express their feelings related to the problems faced to others, so that individuals face it in other ways, such as crying, isolating themselves, and doing other emotion focused coping forms (Sari, 2010). Through this elaboration, it can be concluded that Deaf adolescents who receive social support will not distance themselves from the social environment (distancing) and avoid problems (escape-avoidance) so that individuals are able to overcome their problems (Folkman et al., 1986).

Social support provided by the closest people will also help adolescents find a way out of the problems faced and can make adjustments well (Tricahyani & Wideasavitri, 2016). In this regard, it can be interpreted that social support received also helps improve the adjustment of Deaf adolescents in the social environment, so that the obstacles experienced in their social development can be overcome.

In line with this, it can be concluded that the problems in the social-emotional development of Deaf adolescents that has been overcome will also help them overcome obstacles in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development. This is characterized by good interactions with other people who will help Deaf adolescents improve their language skills and information, and increase self-confidence, so that they can show openness to others.

Referring to the description above, the hypothesis of this study is that there is a relationship between social support and emotion focused coping. The higher the social support obtained by Deaf adolescents in boarding schools, the lower the use of distancing and escape-avoidance dimensions.

## 2. Method

This research is a quantitative correlational study which aims to determine the relation between social support variables and emotion focused coping which includes the dimensions of distancing and escape-avoidance in Deaf adolescents in boarding schools.

The following is the identification of research variables:

- Independent variable: Social support
- Dependent variable: Emotion Focused Coping (contains the distancing and escape-avoidance dimensions).

### A. Sample

The subjects in this study were 53 Deaf adolescents in boarding schools. There were 27 females and 26 males with

ages ranging from 14 to 19 years old. The research sampling was carried out by using saturated sampling technique. The technique was chosen based on Leedy and Ormrod (in his Practice, 2016) who stated that if the population is less than 100 it is best not to take samples and use the entire population as subjects or study participants. This research was conducted in Special School-B Karya Bakti Wonosobo and Special School-B Dena Upakara Wonosobo, Middle School level.

### B. Data Collection Technique

The research instrument used was the social support scale and emotion focused coping scale with the Likert scale model.

The scale of social support was measured by referring to the theory of social support proposed by Rees and Hardy (2000). This scale was made by researchers based on the theory of unidimensional social support, so that social support scores are obtained from the total score of each indicator from each dimension. These dimensions consist of emotional support, award support, information support, and real support.

Meanwhile, the emotion focused coping scale was measured based on the dimensions proposed by Folkman and Lazarus (in Taylor, 1999). This scale was made by researchers based on coping strategies theory that is multidimensional and involve two dimensions of emotion focused coping, namely the distancing and escape-avoidance dimensions.

### C. Data Analysis Technique

This study used Spearman's rho data analysis technique which aims to see the relationship between social support and emotion focused coping, especially in the dimensions of distancing and escape-avoidance. This correlation test was conducted after testing assumptions to find out whether data was normally distributed or not. The data were analyzed by using the IBM SPSS Statistics 23 Program.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Based on the results of the trial used, the social support scale has a reliability coefficient ( $r_{it}$ ) of 0.934 with total item correlation moves from 0.315 to 0.755, so that it can be concluded to be valid and reliable to be used as a data collection tool. There are no items that fall out of the 24 items that have been made.

Meanwhile, the emotion focused coping scale includes the dimension of distancing have a reliability coefficient ( $r_{it}$ )

of 0.735 with total item correlation moves from 0.311 to 0.645 and the escape-avoidance dimension has a reliability coefficient ( $r_{it}$ ) of 0.791 with total item correlation moves from 0.307 to 0.777 so that it can be concluded to be valid and reliable to be used as a data collection tool. There are no items that were dropped from 12 items.

The results of the normality test show the significance value obtained by the social support variable, the distancing and the escape-avoidance dimensions have the same result that is equal to 0,000 by referring to the criteria used if  $p > 0.05$ , the data distribution for all variables studied is not distributed normally.

In the hypothesis test, Spearman's rho correlation analysis was used. Hypothesis test results indicate that social support and dimensions of distancing have a correlation coefficient of -0.447 and a significance value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, social support and escape-avoidance dimension have a correlation coefficient of -0.451 with a significance value of 0.001 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus,  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted, meaning that there is a negative, significant, and quite strong relationship between social support and distancing and escape-avoidance coping in Deaf adolescents in boarding schools. The higher the social support received by Deaf adolescents in boarding schools, the lower the use of distancing and escape-avoidance coping.

According to Dalgard (in Mulia, Elita, & Woferst, 2014) and Meijer (in Mulia et al., 2014), gender differences affect the amount of social support received where women find it easier to get social support than men.

Additional analysis in this study was conducted with analysis of Two independent samples tests, showing that there are no significant differences in social support received by male and female Deaf adolescents. This is indicated with a significance value of 0.894 ( $p > 0.05$ ).

The high social support obtained by Deaf adolescents in boarding schools can be influenced by the availability of social support needed so that Deaf adolescents feel supported by the people closest to them. This is reinforced by the results of preliminary interviews conducted by researchers that Deaf adolescents in boarding schools can contact their parents through hand phone facilities provided in the dormitory or at school. Especially for male Deaf adolescents, they are allowed to hold a private hand phone on weekends, so that they can contact their parents to exchange news. In addition, on weekends, Deaf adolescents in boarding school are allowed to be visited by their parents.

The existence of reciprocal relationships will make individuals believe that the support they need is available, such as love, service, and information (Myers, in Hobfoll, 1986; Maslihah, 2011). It reinforces the results of this study. Then, based on the results of the initial interviews with each teacher in boarding school, Deaf adolescents are taught to help, support, and understand each other, especially when there are misunderstandings both at school and in the dormitory. When in school, the teacher has a role in providing support to Deaf adolescents. This is shown in the form of helping to solve the misunderstanding that occurs between Deaf adolescents, both at school and in the dormitory. The teacher is also willing to listen to Deaf adolescents when they express their opinions or explain anything and want to explain again to Deaf adolescents who misinterpret something.

The empathy by feeling the distress of others and reducing difficulties by increasing the welfare of others is also one of the factors that encourages someone to provide positive support (Myers, in Hobfoll, 1986; Maslihah, 2011). This is proved by the high social support obtained by Deaf adolescents in boarding schools because they have spent time staying together for quite a long time and there are similar characteristic which is Deaf that makes them understand each other.

In addition, the high social support received by Deaf adolescents in boarding schools can be influenced by the achievement of the stage of adolescent development according to Havighurst (in Marliani, 2016) which is able to be emotionally independent from parents and other adults, thus making them less dependent with parents and teachers at school.

Achieving the stage of development where adolescents reach new relationships that are more mature with peers can also be one of the factors that make Deaf adolescents in boarding schools get much social support from their friends. Saguni and Amin (in Mulia et al., 2014) stated that adolescents in middle school age spend a lot of time with peers like looking for groups that are in accordance with their wishes so they can interact with each other. The same thing was also stated by Sarafino (in Mulia et al., 2014), the strength, the importance of friendship, and the amount of time spent with friends were mostly done in early adolescence, generally in middle school age.

In addition, Elizabeth (in Thahir, 2014) and Nursation (in Hasan & Rufaidah, 2015) stated that men and women are considered to have different coping strategies in dealing with

stressors where women tend to use emotion focused coping more than men.

Additional analysis shows that there is no significant difference between the use of coping distortion in male and female Deaf adolescents in boarding schools. This is indicated by the significance value of  $0.864 > 0.05$ . The same results are shown in the escape-avoidance dimension that there is no significant difference in the use of coping escape-avoidance between male and female Deaf adolescents in boarding schools.

The low use of distancing and escape-avoidance coping can be caused by the availability of coping resources such as the high social support obtained by Deaf adolescents in boarding schools from parents, friends, and teachers. In addition, the number of activities held in schools and dormitories, as well as the ability of the individual itself to solve the problem. This supports the statement of Maslihah (2011) stated that the feeling of being supported by the environment makes things easier, especially when facing pressing events.

The results of this study also support the research conducted by Thahir (2014) who said that there is no difference between coping done by men and women due to the increasingly advanced mindset of women with the growing age. In addition, coping strategies are considered to be the most effective when they are in accordance with the type of stress and the situation faced by the individual (Smet, 1994). This shows that there is a possibility that some Deaf adolescents are not pressured by the problems they face. Then, it is also possible that male and female Deaf adolescents use the same coping strategies to face their problems.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the research results and data analysis that have been done, it can be concluded that there is a negative relation between social support and distancing coping. It means that the higher the social support received by the research subject, the lower the use of distancing coping on the subject. Otherwise, the lower the social support received by the research subject, the higher the use of distancing coping on the subject. This is supported by the value of the correlation coefficient of  $-0.447$  which indicates a fairly strong correlation interpretation.

This study also shows that there is a negative relation between social support and escape-avoidance coping. It means that the higher the social support received by the research subject, the lower the use of escape-avoidance

coping on the subject. Otherwise, the lower the social support received by the research subject, the higher the use of escape-avoidance coping on the subject. The value of the correlation coefficient shown is  $-0.451$  which means that the interpretation of the correlation produced is quite strong.

Based on the research results that has been done, the next researchers are expected to increase the number of research subjects, so that they are able to get a normal distribution of data and can be generalized to the entire population. In addition, they can reveal other dimensions of emotion focused coping that have not been revealed in this study and explore more about other factors that can affect emotion focused coping in Deaf adolescents in boarding schools.

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