

## **OVERVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC SELF-ADJUSTMENT PROCESS OF ORPHANAGE CHILDREN FROM THE REGION TIMOR TIMUR BORDER AND CONFLICT TRIBAL WARS IN PAPUA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to describe the academic adjustment that occurs in children from one of the orphanages in Bogor. This research topic was chosen because the majority of children from East Timor and Papua experience learning problems in the first year of moving to a new school. These learning problems are indicated by poor learning performance at school. In the context of children who transfer schools, learning performance in the first year usually decreases, then increases as academic adjustment takes place, but the reality that occurs for the majority of children from East Timor and Papua is that academic performance does not show improvement. This research uses a qualitative approach with interview and observation data collection methods. The description of academic self-adjustment is obtained from three dimensions of academic self-adjustment, namely the dimensions of academic self-adjustment to learning, social environment, and personal. The subjects of this research were 6 children who had just moved within a period of no more than 18 months from Nusa Tenggara and Papua. Three children are at elementary school level, one child is at junior high school level, and one child is at high school level. This research also conducted interviews with teachers, orphanage administrators and subjects. For elementary school subjects, peer triangulation interviews were not conducted. The results of this study found that their academic adjustment process was most supported by the dimensions of the social environment. Each child shows different adjustments to each other. Several factors were found that could influence their academic adjustment. In the learning dimension, the influencing factors are locus of control, self-esteem, extraverted personality. In the social dimension, the adjustment process is influenced by social support and the school environment. In the learning dimension, it is influenced by motivation and self-efficacy. The interesting thing about this research is the discovery of children who have internal locus of control, self-esteem and self-efficacy but do not show good learning performance at school. This is because there are other factors that influence academic adjustment, including potential, health problems and how high the academic demands themselves are. In assisting the academic adjustment process, cooperation is needed from the orphanage, school and the individual concerned to achieve successful learning performance according to demands.

**Keywords:** Academic Adjustment Process, Transferred Students, Orphanage Children, Learning Performance.

### **BACKGROUND**

The orphanage where this research was conducted has 35 foster children from various regions. Eight children were born and raised on the island of Java, while the majority moved from outside Java, namely from Nias (10 people), Nusa Tenggara (7 people) and Papua (7 people). Children of Timor and Papua ethnicity were originally children who came from conflict areas and the atmosphere was not conducive to children's development and education, so they were

sent by their relatives or parents to get a more decent education and life. By moving from their area of origin, they hope to find a safe place to live and the opportunity to receive education and a better life.

Children who come from the border of Timor Timur and Papua usually move down a grade level, some of them even stay in class. Downgrade in this case means being accepted into school at a lower educational level than their educational level should be. For example, those who were in grade 3 of elementary school in their area of origin, based on the results of the school assessment, were accepted but entered school in grade 2 of elementary school. Meanwhile, remaining in class means that the child does not meet the minimum completion criteria and therefore cannot move up to grade. This happens because of differences, especially in the academic field, between their previous school and the new school. This problem is experienced by children, especially in the first years of moving. Ward in Shenoy (1996) explains that adjustment is followed by a learning curve which shows a decrease in problems with the length of stay in a new place.

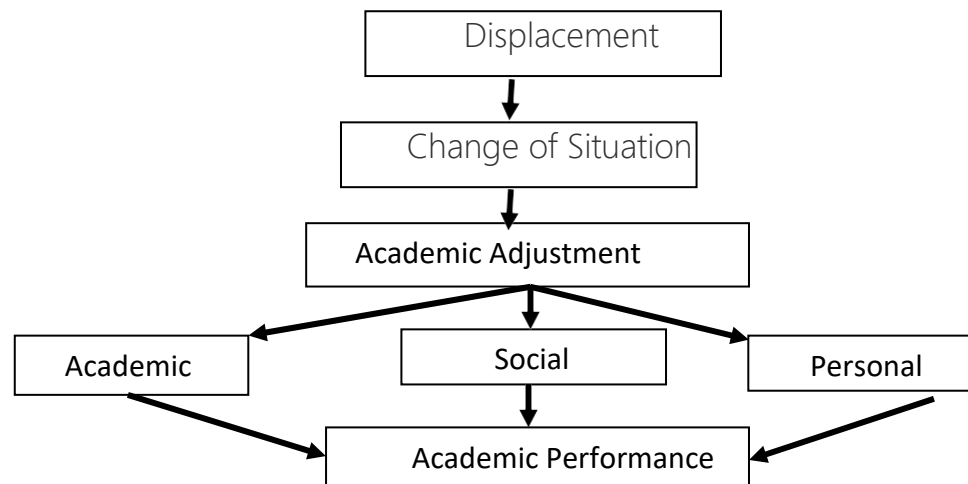
For students who change schools, adjustment has a positive correlation with student academic performance (Safura & Supriyatini, 2006). If students can adapt well to a new environment, student learning performance will show stability or improvement, and vice versa. Children who successfully adapt are expected to have no problems in academic and social processes. Several studies have found that moving has an impact on students' adjustment (Berndt & Thomas, 2007; Wood in Pettit, 2000; Adams, 2004).

New students' adjustment tends to be worse compared to other students who have undergone the previous school year (Berndt & Thomas, 2007). The research also found that perceptions of one's abilities and the new school had an impact on students' academic adjustment. Moving during childhood is associated with an increased risk of failure to achieve at school (Wood; in Pettit, 2000).

In the context of students who experience changing schools, adjustment remains one of the most influencing factors. This is because when a child moves, the demands placed on the new environment and the old environment may be different, so the child makes adjustments to meet the demands of the environment. The environmental demands in this case are academic performance. Poor academic performance such as missing class makes the children involved in this research more likely to become students at risk. At-risk students are students who have a high probability of failing to master the minimum academic skills that are important for their success in adulthood (Ormrod, 2008). Thus it can be concluded that children need to adapt to the environment in order to be able to participate in learning.

Academic self-adjustment is a child's ability to align themselves with the demands of the school environment and achieve satisfaction in academic performance, friendships, teachers and the environment as a whole (Al-Khatib, Awamleh and Samawi, 2012). In the context of this research, the adjustment referred to is the academic adjustment of children who come from the border of East Timor and Papua. The comprehensive academic adjustment model by Russell and Pattrie (in Stoeber, 2001) involves predictive factors in three dimensional areas, namely academic, social/environmental and personal learning. This research uses these three dimensional areas to get a picture of children's academic adjustment to show performance in accordance with the demands of the new school.

## 1. Academic Adjustment Model



The comprehensive academic adjustment model by Russell and Pattrie (in Stoever, 2001) involves predictive factors in three large areas, namely academic, social/environmental and personal learning.

### a. Academic Learning

Adaptation of academic learning to subjects can be seen from children's learning activities in class, work on assignments, and learning performance results. Academic learning factors involve variables related to academic performance. This is because in the context of adjustment, academic performance is a demand that must be met. Academic performance is influenced by factors of intelligence/ability, academic motivation, self-efficacy and attribution (Stover, 2001). Adaptation in this case can be seen from how the child attempts to align his intelligence/abilities to achieve the expected performance. Adjustment in academic learning can be seen from motivation, self-efficacy, and attribution.

### b. Social/Environmental

Kim (in Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dansen, 2002) explains total adjustment as the end of the acculturation process. They classify the level of change in a person's behavior into pre-contact, contact, conflict, crisis and adjustment stages. Everyone will definitely reach the adjustment stage, it's just that the final results for each individual can be different. Social/school environmental adjustment is influenced by several things including social support, school environment, student involvement (Willis in Zilber, 2009; Russell and Pattrie in Stoever, 2001). In the context of this research, children who move to an orphanage lose interaction with family, friends and their previous environment, so that the social support that children receive also decreases. It is hoped that the new environment will accept the child and help the child deal with the changes he is experiencing.

### c. Personal

Personal self-adjustment is self-adjustment in achieving satisfaction in managing oneself by living everyday life (Russell & Petrie in Stoever, 2001). Psychologically healthy individuals are individuals who can adapt to changing circumstances. Individuals who cannot adapt well will trigger the emergence of maladaptive behavior. Previous researchers tried to examine predictive factors from dimensions of personal adjustment that could influence academic performance, but these factors had little effect on the success of academic adjustment. Factors

such as personality, self-esteem, locus of control and coping strategies have an indirect influence on student academic achievement (Stover, 2001).

## **2. Research Methods**

### **Types of Research**

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because academic adjustment discusses children's experiences, thoughts, or feelings while adjusting academically, so qualitative research is needed. The adjustments experienced by each child may be different, depending on each individual's experience, so it requires a qualitative approach.

### **Research Variable**

The variable in this research is academic adjustment.

### **Theoretical Definition**

Academic self-adjustment is the ability to align oneself with the demands of the school environment and achieve satisfaction in academic performance, friendships, teachers and the environment as a whole (Al-Khatib, Awamleh and Samawi, 2012).

### **Operational Definition of Research Variables**

Academic adjustment in the context of this research is a child's ability to face change by aligning the demands of themselves and the school environment in order to achieve the expected goals or resolve the problems they are experiencing. This picture of academic self-adjustment was obtained through interviews and observations of the dimensional areas that influence academic self-adjustment, namely the areas of academic learning, social environment, and personal.

### **Research Subject**

The subjects of this research were 6 people. Research participants who were in elementary school were those from Nusa Tenggara (3 people). Research participants with junior high school education were from Papua (2 people). High school research participants came from Nusa Tenggara (1 person). The subjects who participated in this research were selected using purposive sampling. The selection of participants was carried out based on the consideration that the subjects were deemed to adequately represent the desired characteristics so as to obtain the information expected from the research objectives.

The characteristics of the subjects in this study came from Timor Timur and Papua with a long moving time of 6-12 months. The adjustment process occurs from the individual's first contact with a new environment until 18 months later, when the individual may be experiencing a transition period (Billingmeier & Formann in Landis & Bhagat, 2004). Researchers chose 6-12 months as a consideration that participants were in the process of adjusting and not during a period of culture shock or the end of adjustment.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The main method that researchers use is in-depth interviews, namely interviews that involve the use of guides prepared based on theory, but researchers are given the freedom to carry out further probing beyond the answers given (Berg, 2004). This method was chosen because it allows researchers to get a picture of individual in-depth personal adjustments.

Apart from standardized interviews, researchers also used naturalist observation as a data

collection method. Naturalist observation refers to recording behavior at a time that appears in a natural environment using an objective system of behavioral descriptions that has been prepared by the observer (Watson & Skinner, 2004). The data produced in this observation is in narrative form. This is used to obtain detailed behavior shown by participants in a situation. Another consideration that strengthens narrative observation recording is that researchers obtain observation results in accordance with the context of the natural situation.

### **Research Instrument**

Interview and observation guides are used as a guide so that the researcher knows what data is needed and helps in carrying out the interview so that it does not stray from the research topic. The interview guide was prepared based on the theoretical basis regarding academic adjustment that the researcher presented in the previous chapter using the research context, namely the academic adjustment of children from Timor Timur and Papua.

### **Data Analysis Method**

Data analysis in this research uses verbatim interview results with coding techniques. The purpose of coding is to classify or categorize data. The coding techniques used are open coding and axial coding. Open coding is an initial classification of data coding, while axial coding is a re-analysis of coding that has been carried out previously (Babbie, 2011). Based on these results, patterns between the data obtained are then looked for for further discussion.

This research carries out individual analysis units. This is done based on the consideration that each subject can have different adjustments and depends on the factors that influence their adjustment. The data obtained will look at the uniqueness and differences so that it can provide an overview of each child's adjustment.

### **Research Procedure**

First, researchers conducted a preliminary study to determine the phenomenon that occurred in one of the orphanages in Bogor. Based on this initial study, the researcher determined the research topic. Before carrying out research, researchers build rapport with research participants. This approach is taken to build a sense of comfort and trust so that the subject can open up to the researcher. Activities that can be carried out to build rapport with the subject include visiting the orphanage, accompanying them to study, chatting and eating together. Data collection was carried out for 10 weeks, from April 18 to June 21 2016. In conducting observations of the orphanage, researchers made random visits to the orphanage. During the data collection process, the researcher made ten observations to complete the subject data. School observations were carried out twice in two different lessons for each subject. The number of school observations was 6 observations.

Triangulation interviews were conducted with teachers, orphanage administrators, and friends. The details of the triangulation subjects were one orphanage administrator, seven teachers, and four friends. The subject's friends who were interviewed were the subject's middle school and high school friends. This is because initially the researcher tried to interview friends of elementary school subjects but the results were not enough as additional data, so the triangulation data for elementary school subjects was obtained from orphanage administrators and teachers only.

### **3. Research Results**

PSSA Bhakti Kasih children who come from outside Java moved for economic and educational reasons. Education in the previous environment was not supportive in terms of school facilities

and/or social environment. School facilities that are not supportive include a lack of basic facilities such as books, teaching aids, computers, and so on. The social environment that does not support learning can be different for each subject, for example a lack of community and family awareness, teachers' teaching methods that use physical punishment, or bad company. The previous environment did not provide or placed low performance demands on children, while the new environment places higher demands on children.

When moving, most subjects are supported to adapt academically in a social dimension. The new environment not only places demands but also provides the means for children to adapt. Furthermore, it depends on how each child utilizes the facilities and support provided by the environment to achieve learning performance demands.

Of the nine subjects, the picture of academic adjustment for each individual is different from one another. There are other things outside the dimension of academic adjustment that influence how the subject achieves learning performance according to demands. In fact, there were two subjects (MV and AJ) who showed academic self-adjustment in accordance with the indicators of success but still did not show learning performance as expected. This will be discussed in more depth in the next section.

The following are several things that are typical in influencing academic adjustment for each subject.

- Subject 1 (MV): Shows a picture of academic adjustment that is in accordance with the indicators of the three dimensions, but has not shown the expected performance due to health problems.
- Subject 2 (CK): Shows high self-esteem, easily adapts academically based on social dimensions. Has shown learning behavior that matches the indicators in things that people see but does not show learning behavior that matches the indicators if other people don't see it. It cannot be said that he has adjusted academically.
- Subject 3 (AJ): Shows behavior that is in accordance with indicators of academic adjustment in learning and personal dimensions that originate from the internal locus of control. His learning behavior, which has shown adjustment, has not shown an increase in learning performance according to expectations because his talent is in non-academic fields.
- Subject 5 (L): Successfully adapt academically. Initially he had difficulty communicating, was shy and missed his lessons, but now his performance has reached the average level of children in his class, sociable, confident and cheerful. Shows motivation from within and is supported by the social dimension in adapting.
- Subject 6 (E): From the start he showed good academic potential, but now he has succeeded in developing that potential by achieving scores above the average of his classmates. This potential is supported by motivation within himself and his social environment.
- Subject 7 (S): Study behavior at school is in accordance with indicators of academic adjustment, but study behavior at the orphanage is not in accordance with indicators of academic adjustment. His learning behavior has not been consistent at school and at the orphanage. He is more comfortable at school because he is supported, while at the orphanage he feels uncomfortable because his friends often tease him. Requires external encouragement to adapt.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

When moving to a new environment, children come into contact with different situations. This move requires them to leave their families and hometowns to live in a different area than before. Urban daily habits are different from their home areas, so they have to adapt to new habits. These habits include using transportation, using gadgets/technology, and daily activities such

as playing, studying, and helping with homework. In the new environment they also meet people from different ethnicities, religions and languages.

Children who move experience a process of adjustment, especially in the academic field. When moving to a new area, children will occupy new social situations and academic demands that may be different from their previous area. These changes are likely to have psychological impacts on children, such as homesickness, feeling inferior, difficulty getting along, and other problems. These changes mean that children have to adapt in order to continue achieving their goals, especially in terms of academics. In this research, teachers are an environmental component that plays a major role in providing support for academic adjustment. When teachers can understand students' characteristics, teachers can help provide appropriate methods to help students face obstacles in learning so that students can adapt better.

Locus of control and motivation are one of the determinants that can predict whether a child will show the expected learning performance or not. The researchers' findings regarding PSAA children's locus of control on their learning motivation are in line with the findings of Saricam (2015) who found that locus of control and motivational persistence have a causal relationship. Those who have an internal locus of control will have internal motivation that can encourage them to strive to achieve academic performance according to expectations.

Along with a social environment that supports learning, subjects who have an internal locus of control show learning behavior that is in accordance with indicators of academic adjustment. Those who have an internal locus of control have motivation from within themselves. Learning behavior that shows motivation is still demonstrated when there are no external factors that encourage it, such as supervision by teachers or orphanage administrators. Their learning behavior that shows motivation also persists even when facing difficulties. These four subjects show that they are actively adapting themselves to academics. They make efforts to achieve learning performance in line with expectations.

However, not all who show active behavior in adapting academically succeed in achieving the expected performance. Subjects who have not been successful have other factors outside the dimension of academic adjustment that prevent them from achieving appropriate learning performance. These factors include health and personal potential. Subjects who have shown efforts to adapt academically but do not have academic potential cannot show the expected academic performance. On the contrary, this subject actually has non-academic potential in the field of sports and has shown good performance, he was even recommended by his teacher to take part in sports olympiads at a higher level. Subjects who have health problems are also hampered in achieving performance because they are often unable to attend lessons due to illness. Unlike other children who receive maximum lessons, he is hampered in learning. He has difficulty achieving the expected learning performance even though he has shown efforts to achieve it.

On the other hand, participants who have an external locus of control do not take advantage of the social environment that supports them in learning. They actually feel that they will not achieve appropriate learning performance because the demands are too high and competition is tight. In the end, they have no motivation to learn, or they show motivation but are not persistent. When subjects do not show persistent motivation, they have not shown maximum effort to achieve learning performance, so it can be said that they have not adapted academically.

In the context of PSAA Bhakti Kasih, children who are more adaptable academically are

children who have an internal locus of control. This also takes into account the condition of the orphanage with the limited number of administrators and the parenting style of the orphanage administrators. Children who have an external locus of control need external encouragement to adapt. These children may not be able to be guided optimally due to the limited number of administrators. Apart from that, orphanage administrators also have unique parenting styles. The parenting style of orphanage administrators is always to wait for the child's awareness from within and only intervene if the child is truly unable to cope on his own. Children with an external locus of control will have difficulty adapting academically to this type of parenting.

On the other hand, this parenting style provides free space for children who have an internal locus of control to develop themselves in achieving the demands of academic performance.

The academic performance shown by several subjects that have not adapted, some have shown improvement but have not changed much, but some have not improved at all. They are able to mix with their peers, follow lessons and obey school rules like other students, but have not shown academic performance as expected. One interesting case is a subject who quickly blends into the environment and becomes fluent in Indonesian more quickly, but after this class promotion he does not show much improvement compared to before. This is in accordance with the opinion of Billingmeier & Formann (in Landis & Bhagat, 2004) which states that after a period of six months, individuals have begun to go through the initial transition period but it is not a certainty that individuals will be successful in the next phase.

One of the things that influenced the academic adjustment of most of the participants in this research was language. Language according to Kaplan (in Gonzales, 2004) influences how a person thinks according to culture which ultimately influences two things, namely how to accept and respond to someone from another culture, and how a person communicates verbally and in writing. This verbal and written communication reflects logical thinking patterns. In the context of academic adjustment, language influences how students receive and respond to teachers, and vice versa. Language also influences how students can convey their learning results back through written or verbal assignments so that they can be re-evaluated by the teacher.

### **Practical Advice**

1. When children move, the first thing children need to master is language. If the child is not yet fluent in Indonesian, the orphanage administrators and alumni are expected to help the child first get used to using Indonesian.
2. At school, teachers should be aware of children's initial characteristics and abilities. Teachers are expected not to make demands that are too high. The demands given must be achievable by the child but not too easy. In this way, children will be encouraged to develop themselves without fear of failure. Teachers are also expected to remain optimistic and monitor children's development.
3. All children who were the subjects of this research made academic adjustments, but not all children realized that they were experiencing academic adjustments. Those who do not realize that they need to adjust academically do not know the obstacles that arise, so they cannot overcome these obstacles. A practical step that can help make children aware is to use my motivation board. On this board, children are asked to fill in what changes they have experienced, what goals they want to achieve when they move, what obstacles they may experience and what they can do to overcome them. By filling in this board, it is hoped that children will become accustomed to being aware of the obstacles they experience and growing their own efforts to overcome these obstacles.



4. Orphaned children who are older and have been in the orphanage longer can be given the responsibility to care for their younger siblings who have just entered the orphanage. The requirements for children who can become foster siblings are that they come from the same area, have successfully adapted academically and are responsible for their duties at the orphanage and school. The responsibilities given include training the foster sibling to be fluent in Indonesian and being a source of social support for the child.
5. Orphanage administrators can give awards to children who have successfully adapted and demonstrated good learning performance. This method is expected to increase children's motivation to achieve learning performance demands, especially for those who have external motivation. Rewards that can be given include praise, hugging, giving gifts, sharing together during religious services or giving stars to children who have successfully adapted.

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