Hardiness, Sense of Belonging, and Homesickness among First-year Boarding School Students

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the effect of hardiness and sense of belonging on homesickness among first-year boarding school students, involving 219 new students in Agam, West Sumatera by using the cluster sampling technique. A questionnaire was used to collect data were DRS-II adapted by Sinclair (2003), the sense of belonging scale-revised adapted by Hoffman et al (2002); and a homesickness scale based on the dimensions proposed by Stroebe et al (2002). The hypothesis test is done with multiple linear regression analysis resulting in the value of F=16,699 (p<0.05). Data analysis results explained that hardiness and a sense of belonging together contributed 14.6 % influence toward homesickness.

1 INTRODUCTION

Boarding school is one of the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia that's able to maintain its existence in this modern era. One of the special characteristics of boarding school is an integration of science and religious values into the educational process. To implement its curriculum, boarding school requires all students to live in a dormitory for six years of their education.

The transition process that students go through when they leave home to the dormitory can provide new experiences in life. However, students can also find the transition to be anxiety-provoking and isolating (Thurber & Walton, 2012). Mostly this situation gives the potential trigger for several problems such as homesickness (Stroebe, Van Vliet, Hewstone, & Willis, 2002).

Homesickness is defined as a negative emotional state caused by separation from home and close people, and the longing to return home accompanied by unhappiness and disorientation feeling in a new place (Stroebe, Schut, & Nauta, 2016). This feeling of longing operates on a spectrum, ranging from mild to intense symptoms of homesickness debilitating effects on daily functioning (Fisher, 2016).

Previous researchers (Fisher, Frazer, & Murray, 1986) explained that 71% of students experienced homesickness during their time away from home in boarding school. It is supported by Yasmin's study that 81.40% of students in boarding school have felt homesick in their first year of school (Yasmin & Daulay, 2017).

Homesickness can negatively affect the adaptation process, academic performance, anxiety, and loneliness (Flett, Endler, & Besser, 2009; Stroebe et al., 2002). Previous findings (Thurber & Walton, 2012) explained that homesick students are 3 times more likely to drop out of school than those who were not homesick. At a more severe level, it can trigger various psychological problems such as depression and suicide (Willis, Stroebe, & Hewstone, 2003).

One of the factors that play an important role in responding to a problem is hardiness. Hardiness is a set of attitudes consisting of commitment, control, and challenges that play a role to provides the courage and motivation to do the hard work of turning stressful changes from potential disasters into opportunities instead (Maddi, 2004).

For a hardy person, it will be easier to control their life including difficult situations and various emotions that fluctuate during the transition from the original environment to the new place. Although they feel homesick, they try to use various strategies to reduce homesickness and adapt well to a new environment.

Vogt, Rizvi, Shipherd, and Resick (2008) explained that a person with high hardiness is more positive and optimistic about the situations that can push and trigger stress and face problems as an important stimulus for learning (Vogt et al., 2008).

This is supported by several studies that showed that hardiness can influence psychological distress and as a predictor of success in psychological adjustment when living in a new environment (Harrison & Brower, 2011; Jotwani, 2016).

Another factor that also affects homesickness is the sense of belonging. Goodenow (1993) described the concept of a sense of belonging as a student's sense of being accepted, respected, valued, included, and encouraged by all members of the school (teachers and peers) in the academic classroom setting and feeling oneself be an important part of the life and activities of the class.

When students left the home to stay in a dormitory, many things disappear such as affection, comfort, and attention from the family which can lead to homesickness. If the new environment can help individuals to feel comfortable and accepted, then it can become a new resource in giving warmth that they previously received.

Based on many researchers explained that the sense of belonging is one of the most important factors for all students to function well in academic learning and environments. Zhao, Lu, Wang, Chau, & Zhang (2012) al explained that people who have a sense of belonging tend to be healthy and happy. It is in line with Watt and Badger's (2009) study that individuals who feel accepted in their environment will experience a lower level of homesickness. The lack of a sense of belonging can lead individuals to negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, jealousy, and feelings of loneliness (Choenarom, Williams, & Hagerty, 2005; Osterman, 2000). Thus, a sense of belonging plays a role in helping individuals to reduce attachment to home and control feelings of homesickness when moving to a new environment.

2 METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of hardiness and a sense of belonging on homesickness among first-year boarding school students. The subjects of this study were 219 new students in West Sumatera with the cluster sampling technique.

Several measuring instruments were used in data collection, namely: 1. DRS-II adapted by Sinclair (Sinclair & Oliver, 2003) to measure hardiness; 2. sense of belonging scale-revised adapted by Hoffman et al to measure sense of belonging (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2018); and, 3. The homesickness scale is based on the homesickness

dimension proposed by Stroebe et al to measure homesickness (Stroebe et al., 2002).

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on multiple regression analysis, it showed an F value of 16,699 with a significance is 0.00, which means that both hardiness and a sense of belonging play a significant role in homesickness with an effective contribution of 14.6%. Based on this, the hypothesis that stated "hardiness and sense of belonging affect homesickness" is accepted. It means that the higher a person's hardiness and sense of belonging, the lower his homesickness will be. The hardiness and sense of belonging variables contributed 14.6% to homesickness, while the remaining 85.4 % came from the influence of other variables outside of the study. Both hardiness and a sense of belonging can separately also contribute to homesickness.

Most students faced some adjustment issues when first attending and living in a boarding school. Homesickness is one of a phenomenon that's often experienced by them. The separation experienced by students from their families is a quite difficult situation due to the limited intensity of interaction and communication compared to living together (Borg & Cefai, 2014). In addition, unfamiliar situations, culture, routines, and space social also bring a big pressure in new environments. These various situations were triggered homesickness.

Kobasa, Maddi, and Kahn (1982) believed that the fundamental thing that can predict a person's success in controlling stress is a personality type known as hardiness. A person with hardiness has several important characteristics, namely commitment, control, and challenges (Kobasa, 1979).

In the characteristics of commitment, individuals have a strong motivation to persist and be consistent in pursuing goals despite facing various problems in the process. They also tend to stay involved with the people and events going on around them to find what is experientially interesting and meaningful (Kobasa, 1979; Maddi, 2004).

In the control, it refers to the control power when dealing with unexpected situations. They showed enthusiasm to influence the outcomes going on around them, even if this may seem difficult in certain circumstances Meanwhile, challenges are defined as the tendency to view a change in life as something normal and be able to anticipate these changes as a useful stimulus for development and see life as a pleasant challenge (Kobasa, 1979; Maddi, 2004).

The various characteristics contained in hardiness can assist new students in responding to displacement as something challenging and fun, developing strategies aimed at minimizing the potential for homesickness rather than indulging themselves in denial and avoidance. So that they can function positively in the new environment.

The explanation above is in line with several previous studies which showed that hardiness plays a role in controlling stress in students (Arishanti & Juniarly, 2019), as well as predicting the success of students' psychological adjustment when living in a new environment (Harrison & Brower, 2011).

Besides hardiness, another thing that also affects homesickness is the sense of belonging. One of the approaches that focus on the sense of belonging concept is Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow explained that there are five basic human needs, from basic to most sophisticated which consist of physiological needs, safety needs, love, belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. The needs that exist at the lowest level must be satisfied first before the needs at the next level are met (Maslow, 1956).

When a person's basic (physiological) needs and safety are properly met, they will try to find sources of comfort and develop loving relationships and attachments to others around them. Baumeister and Leary (1995) explained the sense of belonging concept as a lasting and positive interpersonal attachment, characterized by consistent and sustainable care for the surrounding environment.

At the time of moving to the boarding school, students leave their comfort zone, a home as the source of their physical and emotional needs to the new environment with new roles and guidance. This complex situation can potentially trigger feelings of homesickness.

If the new environment can exist and play a significant role in student life, then it can be a new resource of warmth like at home. In other words, the existence of a sense of belonging can make individuals feel at home because of the feeling of being fully appreciated and accepted by the new environment (Muhaeminah, 2015).

The above explanation is in line with several previous studies which stated that once students feel more integrated into the university context, they are more likely to feel accepted, which reduce the degrees of homesickness (Muhaeminah, 2015) and show a high level of satisfaction with their study experience in a new environment (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011; Sun, Hagedorn, & Zhang, 2016).

4 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and discussion that have been done, it can be concluded that hardiness and a sense of belonging contribute to homesickness. The higher a person's hardiness and sense of belonging, the lower his homesickness will be. The existence of hardiness possessed by individuals will help in controlling the homesickness during the transition process from home to boarding school. In addition, the attachment and acceptance that are built between individuals and the environment that create the sense of belonging also help in giving the family roles that were previously obtained by students at home so that feelings of homesickness diminished.

Based on the result, students are advised to be able to socialize with people around the boarding school's environment as a substitute for family members to increase their sense of belonging to the new environment. In addition, the school can also conduct training to increase hardiness and carry out various activities to increase the sense of belonging between students. For further researchers, it is recommended to involve external variables that can affect homesickness such as parenting styles, peer attachment, culture, social support, and intensity of parent's visiting. In addition, further researchers can also conduct a qualitative study of the dynamics of homesickness for each student to see the differences in the process of the emergence of homesickness and the various factors that influence it.

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