Social Adjustment: 'Moving Matured Me' (A Phenomenological Study on Adolescents Experiencing Residential Mobility)

Ravellia Ayu Rizky¹, Fatma Kusuma Mahanani²*)

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Abstract: Humans are social beings who will always encounter other humans throughout their lives. These encounters often lead to conflicts due to individual differences. Adjustment is crucial for humans to mitigate such conflicts. For individuals who experience frequent residential mobility, they are more likely to encounter diverse individuals, making adjustment key to achieving well-being and other aspects of life. This study aims to explore social adjustment among adolescents who frequently experience residential mobility. The research employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological perspective. The data sources are adolescents who have experienced residential mobility. Data collection techniques include interviews, observations, and documentation. Data validity is checked through triangulation. Data analysis techniques involve data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The findings show that each participant was able to achieve good social adjustment. Each was able to appreciate differences, socialize with others, show empathy, help others, and respect rules. There are seven specific findings in this study. Additionally, the study also discovered the dynamics of social adjustment that lead to the understanding that mobility contributes to the maturation of each participant.

Keywords: Social Adjustment, Adolescents, Residential Mobility


Kata Kunci: Penyesuaian sosial, remaja, residential mobility

PENDAHULUAN

In this modern era, relocation is a common occurrence. This is due to various reasons, including fulfilling basic human needs. According to the Inter-Census Population Survey (SUPAS) conducted by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2015, there are several reasons for relocation, such as employment, education, following a spouse/child, joining other family members, political/security reasons, environmental disasters, and other factors.

The Population Census conducted by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2010 shows that internal migration, especially recent migration, indicates that the current place of residence differs from the place of residence five years ago. Nationally, the percentage of recent migrants is 2.4%, meaning that out of 213.9 million respondents, 5.1 million lived in a different province five years ago. Even the
lifetime migration rate in Indonesia increased from 8.2% in 1990 to 11.7% in 2010. This suggests that population movement is increasing, both in absolute and percentage terms, confirming that population mobility is becoming easier.

Residential mobility, as defined by McLeod (2006), is the relocation of individuals that results in a change of residence and/or school. Various differences will be encountered, such as social norms, climate, language, culture, rules, and community characteristics. Whether ready or not, individuals will have to adjust to their new environment to be accepted and perform their social roles effectively.

Adolescents experiencing residential mobility are required to adjust to changes within themselves and adapt to new environments. According to Clarabella et al. (2015), this adjustment can impact psychological well-being and determine whether they are accepted in the new environment.

Based on initial interviews, all three respondents found it difficult to adapt due to various reasons, such as culture and social environment. There are also ongoing impacts of relocation that they still feel. The adjustment to the new environment remains challenging, while family adjustment is somewhat easier, although some obstacles were encountered.

During adolescence, individuals often interact and try to establish social relationships with peers. In daily life, individuals will encounter others with different characteristics, sometimes leading to conflict. One way to understand these differences and reduce conflict is through adaptation or adjustment. Adjustment is crucial for achieving a balance between internal demands and external environmental demands.

Adjustment is essential in social and community life. According to Schneiders (1960), adjustment is a process where individuals strive to overcome or master needs, tensions, frustrations, and conflicts within themselves to achieve harmony and balance with their environment. This means that adjustment is an ability to react effectively and adequately to reality, situations, and social relations.

According to research by Clarabella et al. (2015), the majority of adolescents experiencing residential mobility have high levels of adjustment. High adjustment levels are not separate from the challenging processes experienced by these individuals. Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying social adjustment in adolescents experiencing residential mobility. Furthermore, research on residential mobility from a psychological perspective is still rare; the researcher only found one study by Clarabella et al. in 2015.

The aim of this study is to understand social adjustment in adolescents experiencing residential mobility. The theoretical benefits of this research contribute to the field of psychology regarding social adjustment for adolescents experiencing residential mobility. The practical benefits for the researcher will help understand social adjustment in adolescents experiencing residential mobility. For parents or the general public, this research will provide insights into social adjustment in adolescents faced with residential mobility.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Adjustment

According to Schneiders (1960), social adjustment is a process where individuals strive hard to solve or master needs within themselves, turmoil, frustrations, and conflicts, with the aim of achieving harmony and balance between environmental demands and internal demands. According to Hurlock (1990), social adjustment is the success of an individual in interacting with others in general or in groups while maintaining pleasant behavior. According to Calhoun and Accocella (1995), social adjustment is the continuous interaction with oneself, others, and the surrounding world or environment. Kartono (2002) defines social adjustment as the success of an individual in adjusting with others (in general) and with the family (in particular), where the individual identifies with themselves. Based on these expert opinions, it can be concluded that social adjustment is the process of an individual striving to harmonize internal factors with external environmental factors.

Aspects of Social Adjustment

Schneiders (1960) outlines several aspects of social adjustment to society as follows:

a. Recognizing and respecting the rights of others in society.

b. Socializing with others and encouraging the development of friendships.

c. Having interest and sympathy for the well-being of others.

d. Being charitable and helpful.

e. Respecting the values and integrity of laws and customs in society.

Types of Social Adjustment

According to Schneiders (1960), there are several types of social adjustment:

1. Social adjustment in the family environment, including:
   a. Overall relations with all family members (parents and siblings)
   b. Willingness to accept parental authority (obeying rules set by parents)
   c. Capacity to bear responsibility and accept limitations (family norms)
   d. Striving to help family members, both individually and as a group, in achieving their goals
   e. Gradual emancipation from home and growing independence in each child within the family

2. Social adjustment in the school environment:
   a. Willingness to respect and accept school rules
   b. Participation in school activities
   c. Forming friendships with schoolmates
   d. Showing respect towards teachers, school leaders, and other staff
   e. Assisting the school in realizing its objectives

3. Social adjustment in the community:
   a. Recognizing and respecting the rights of others in society
   b. Maintaining and developing friendships with others
   c. Having interest and sympathy for the well-being of others
   d. Being helpful and altruistic
   e. Respecting societal values, laws, traditions, and policies

Adolescence

According to Steinberg (1993), adolescence is divided into three phases: early adolescence from age 11 to 14, middle adolescence from age 15 to 18, and late adolescence from age 18 to 21. According to Santrock (2007),
adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, ranging from age 10 to 13 and ending around age 18 to 22. According to Papalia and Olds (in Putro, 2017), adolescence is a transitional development phase between childhood and adulthood, usually starting at age 12 or 13 and ending in the late teens or early twenties.

**Residential Mobility**

Residential mobility is the relocation of individuals resulting in a change of residence and school or a combination of both (McLeod, 2006). According to Coulton et al. (2012), residential mobility is a process or stage that changes life and environment. Residential mobility is a significant experience affecting individual development, both for children and adolescents (Clarabella, 2015).

Relocation or residential mobility has both positive and negative impacts. According to research by Kelley in 2003 (in Clarabella, 2015), the experience of relocation or residential mobility strongly contributes to stress, especially when adolescents lose old friends, gain new friends, and adjust after moving. Facing a new environment and school disrupts peer relationships and particularly affects children emotionally, requiring full attention and parental care during the initial period of relocation.

**METHODS**

In this study, a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach is employed to explore the subjective experiences of adolescents who have undergone residential mobility. According to Packer (cited in Kahija, 2017), phenomenology is a reflective study of the essence of consciousness as experienced from the first-person perspective. The primary objective of this study is to understand and explore the social adjustment experiences of adolescents who have moved residences. Secondary objectives include identifying challenges faced during the adjustment process and coping mechanisms employed by the adolescents.

The unit of analysis in this study is the aspects of social adjustment as defined by Schnieders (1960). Each aspect will be operationally defined to guide the interview questions and observation criteria. The sampling method used is purposive sampling, with three primary subjects and four secondary subjects that include friends and family members of each primary subject.

Data collection techniques involve semi-structured interviews with a duration of approximately 45-60 minutes per interview, non-participant observations in natural settings such as homes, schools, and social gatherings with a duration of around 3-4 hours per observation session, as well as document analysis involving diaries, social media posts, and other relevant written records. Data validity will be checked using data triangulation, which involves cross-comparison and verification of data from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Additionally, transcripts and findings will be shared with participants for validation, known as “member checking.”

Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, where transcripts will be coded and categorized to identify recurring themes. Qualitative data analysis software like NVivo will be used in this process. Ethically, written consent will be obtained from all participants, and all data will be anonymized and its confidentiality strictly maintained.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the research conducted in the field, it was found that all three participants in this study have good social adjustment. This is evaluated based on the fulfillment of the aspects of social adjustment by Schnieders (1960), which include recognizing and respecting the rights of others, socializing and encouraging the development of friendships, having interest and sympathy for the well-being of others, doing charitable acts, and respecting the values and integrity of laws and customs in society.

The first aspect is recognizing and respecting the rights of others. This means that when social conflicts occur, it becomes an indicator of failure to implement this aspect. The first participant, RL, was able to respect differences, as evidenced by never having disagreements with professors or roommates, and was able to appreciate people with different personalities by trying to understand and mingle with them.

The second participant, IR, was able to respect others because he evaluates people based on their way of thinking. IR also realizes that not everyone can accept him as he is; there are individuals who do not find him appealing, and IR does not force them to do so. The third participant, AG, never had personal disagreements with professors and was able to respect others when there was something different about them, whether in appearance or perspective.

Meiza (2018) states that tolerance will lead someone to build harmony in community life with others who have different social and cultural backgrounds. The tolerance possessed by all three participants was able to bring harmony in community life with others. According to Tilaar (2004), there is a need to foster a tolerant attitude in society to reduce tension caused by differences in society, requiring multicultural education.

According to Liu and Lin (in Agustian et al., 2018), multicultural education is the recognition of individual values and the development of individual potential so that individuals are able to appreciate their own ethnicity as well as others. Multicultural education in all three participants was experienced by the participants themselves through their relocation to various regions. Thus, the participants were able to reach the stage of appreciating differences in society.

The second aspect is socializing with others and being able to encourage the development of friendships. All three participants were able to socialize with others, as evidenced by having close friends during their relocation, participating in organizations and events or group competitions, being close to roommates or other majors, and even having online friends with the same hobbies, such as K-Pop for the first participant (RL). The third participant (AG) was even active in church activities. In addition, AG still maintains friendships with his elementary and high school friends to this day.

According to Hurlock (in Ardi et al., 2012), adolescents generally have two or three close friends where they influence each other. According to Kay (in Putro, 2017), one of the developmental tasks of adolescents is to develop skills in interpersonal communication and be able to socialize with peers both individually and in groups. In line with the expert statements above, all three participants have passed one developmental task of adolescence, which is marked by findings of socializing with others.

Lagenkamp’s 2014 study titled “Effects of School Mobility on Adolescent Social Ties and Academic Adjustment” shows that transfer students are much less likely to have friends in their new school. These findings do
not support the findings in this study where all three participants always have friends in their relocation areas. The third aspect is having interest and sympathy for the well-being of others. All three participants were able to fulfill this aspect, as evidenced when the closest people of each participant, whether family or friends, talked about their problems, all three participants were able to provide a good response in the form of listening to the story, giving advice if needed, and even comforting when the person telling them felt sad.

According to Hadjam (2001), the ability to listen actively means that listening is not merely to answer but to listen to understand and understand. According to Aminah (2018), the purpose of active listening is to clarify individual understanding and show interest in the communication being established. Listening can help build trust and is a form of support for someone.

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of meaning-making of relocation from the dynamics of adjustment in all three respondents. As shown in Table 4.8, this meaning-making began with relocations that were not of their own choosing and occurred frequently, followed by challenges in the new locations such as language barriers and encountering individuals with diverse characteristics.

Subsequently, conflicts arose, as well as living in individualistic environments, differing family relationships, and varying personalities among the respondents. All these challenges led to coping mechanisms and problem-solving strategies, culminating in the realization that relocation is a process of maturation.

The first process is relocation that is not of one's own choosing and occurs frequently. In research by Norford and Medway (2002), relocations are categorized into "frequent" with 6-13 relocations, "infrequent" with 3-5 relocations, and "non-relocating." In this study, it was found that the first respondent RL relocated 7 times, the second respondent IR 8 times, and AG 10 times, including within the city. Therefore, it can be said that the relocations experienced by all three respondents were frequent.

During their relocations, all three respondents faced challenges in forming friendships in each of their new locations. Some areas were easy to socialize in, while others were difficult. All three respondents encountered language barriers and diverse individuals in each of their new locations. Indonesia is a multicultural country with diverse languages, ethnicities, and religions (Rondiyah et al., 2017). This indicates that when relocating to different regions, one will inevitably encounter different languages. According to Bornstein et al. (2013), language is an important indicator of successful social adjustment and functioning in society, as it is also a basic skill for various aspects of cognitive and socio-emotional development (Gleason and Ratner; Hoff, in Bornstein et al., 2013).

Conflicts also occurred during the relocations experienced by all three respondents; they had conflicts with their friends. However, according to Wang and Fletcher (2016), friendships are built on emotional commitment, and conflicts with friends and failure to resolve such conflicts can place children at risk of socio-emotional maladaptation. According to Adam and Chase-Lansdale (2002), relocation can affect adolescents' lives both inside and outside the home and influence various functional areas, including relationships, physical settings, activities, and routines. Due to the increasing relationships during adolescence with external communities and challenges related to adolescent transition, adolescents in residence during these years may be highly disruptive.

Expert opinions above indicate that relocation can affect adolescents' lives both inside and outside the home. In all three respondents, it was found that the home environment was individualistic, with no activities that could be done together in the community, making social adjustment during relocation a unique challenge. The environment plays an important role in an adolescent's life, especially in the process of social adjustment.

Another finding in all three respondents is personality. Each respondent certainly has different personalities. This also poses a challenge for respondents in making social adjustments. The first respondent RL has a reserved personality and does not care if someone dislikes her. The second respondent IR tends to avoid people he is incompatible with, does not care about being liked or disliked, and is capable of being assertive. The third respondent AG is also able to be assertive.

According to research by Permakisz (2019), assertiveness can predict individual adjustment in universities, emotional adjustment, self-adjustment, opposite-sex adjustment, social adjustment, and academic adjustment. Based on the research results above, it can be said that the second respondent (IR) and the third respondent (AG) are able to achieve social adjustment more easily compared to the first respondent (RL). Meanwhile, research by Magee et al. (2016) shows that variability or the spread of personality is inconsistently associated with adjustment.

Another finding is the family condition of the three respondents; they all tend to be close to one of their parents. The first respondent (RL) and the second respondent (AG) are closer to their mothers, while the third respondent (IR) is closer to his father. In addition to the relationship with their parents, all three respondents also have a close relationship with their siblings. Anderson et al. (2014) state that low-quality interactions with children and parents are associated with academic and behavioral problems in children. This proves that the relationship with parents plays an important role in a child's academic and behavioral issues.

After facing various challenges, all three respondents have coping mechanisms and problem-solving strategies. This is what allows the respondents to reach a meaning for their relocations. According to Lazarus (in Situmorang and Desiningrum, 2018), coping stress is a cognitive and behavioral effort by someone to control demands from outside or within oneself that are considered to be thought-provoking or stressful. In research conducted by Clark et al. (2014) on nursing students, it was found that ways to cope with stress include talking to others, going out with friends, family, and pets, or exercising.

In the first respondent RL, the coping stress performed is playing with her pet cat and writing stories, while in the second respondent IR, what he does is reading books, playing games, walking, and watching movies. In the third respondent, what she does for coping is expressing her sadness; if necessary, she will cry to her maximum point.

According to Heffer and Willoughby (2017), regardless of the potential benefits of using various strategies to cope with stress, coping with stress is difficult for individuals experiencing poor adjustment. There are two indicators of poor adjustment examined in this study, namely symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation. This shows that coping stress is possessed by individuals who are able to adjust well.

In addition to coping stress, there is a finding of problem-solving in all three respondents. RL, IR, and AG have problem-solving skills; when there is a problem, the third respondent, what she does for coping is expressing her sadness; if necessary, she will cry to her maximum point. According to Schneider (2006), there is a basic pattern of adjustment divided into three elements, namely 1) motivation, frustration, or conflict, 2) the emergence of varying responses, and 3) solution or tension reduction in the form of a specific response. All three respondents encountered conflicts during their relocations and had responses such as remaining silent to hostility. Then a solution emerged to reduce tension through problem-solving and coping stress.

The occurrence of social adjustment dynamics in all three respondents and various understandings that arise in each respondent, starting from relocation that is not of their own choosing with frequent frequency, finding challenges and conflicts to the emergence of ways to reduce tension and support findings such as in the first respondent RL who has reached the stage of being accustomed to making adjustments, the second respondent IR who has a sense of
responsible, and the third respondent AG who has the freedom to do things while still obeying the surrounding regulations, make all three respondents come to the meaning that relocation matures them.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research is that each respondent was able to achieve good social adjustment. Each respondent was capable of appreciating differences, socializing with others, showing empathy towards others, assisting others, and respecting rules. Specific themes that were discovered include parenting styles, the impact of relocation, good academic performance, a sense of responsibility, friend characteristics, adaptability, and the freedom to engage in various activities. Additionally, the study found a dynamic of social adjustment that leads to the meaning-making that relocation contributes to the maturation of each respondent. This dynamic begins with relocation that are not of one’s own choosing and occur frequently, followed by challenges such as individual differences, language barriers, conflicts, individualistic environments, relationships with family, and varying personalities. These challenges then give rise to coping mechanisms and problem-solving strategies, culminating in the realization that relocation is a process of maturation.

Limitations in this research include the difficulty the researcher faced in gathering in-depth information from significant others, largely due to the interviews being conducted via personal chat because of the Covid-19 pandemic conditions. Furthermore, the use of observational methods in this study is considered to be less than optimal, also due to being conducted through personal chat. Recommendations for future researchers include the continued development of discussions on residential mobility in Indonesia from a psychological perspective, both in terms of its impact and other variables such as well-being.

REFERENCES


