

Telling-Writing Technique as Psychological and Literacy Therapy for Children Affected by The Covid-19 Pandemic Disaster

Nisa Roiyasa^{1*}, Prayogo Hadi Sulistio²

^{1,2}Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Indonesia

*Email: nroiyasa@unsoed.ac.id

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Abstract. Negative and permanent impacts of Covid-19 pandemic and distant learning are can be serious and permanent to students at the Primary School level. This is a dangerous threat considering that elementary school is a time of instillation of basic values, skills, and knowledge for the physical, cognitive, and affective development. Researchers conducted a research in Lumbr district, Banyumas regency and designed a technique for psychological and literacy therapy for children in elementary school age affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This research is an experimental study. The findings are served in qualitative descriptive way. The research reveals that Children's Mental Health should be the main focus in the early days of learning. Just above a half of the students in Lumbr as border area do not live with their parents as their parents must work in big cities. There were significant changes on mental, behavior and one-year learning loss due to the pandemic. The technique is proven able to eliminate affective filters on the students affected by covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Telling-writing technique, psychological therapy, literacy therapy, Covid-19 pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

The government has taken steps to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable lines to cope with emergencies. One of the policies implemented is the implementation of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM). For this policy, the world of education also applies *study from home*. Learning that was originally carried out face-to-face on the same dimension of physical space turned into a model of distance learning through online or online media (online). On the one hand, online learning provides awareness of the extraordinary potential of the internet for the world of education (Ramos et al., 2020). However, behind that, the online learning process, and the reduced space for children to socialize amid the implementation of PPKM, also holds serious latent dangers. Nadiem Makarim said that the effect of prolonged distance learning can be very negative and permanent for students" (Solopos.com 7/3/2020). This negative and permanent impact is particularly threatening to students at the Primary School level. This is a serious threat considering that elementary school is a time of instillation of basic values, skills, and knowledge for the physical, cognitive, and affective development of children (Mulyadi, 2012).

Among the problems that arise in Banyumas based on interviews and observations conducted are a decrease in children's morale and discipline, a decrease in children's literacy skills and mastery of teaching

materials, a decrease in social skills, misuse of gadgets, and emotional instability. Maddy Savage in her BBC article *Worklife* (2020) warned of the potential for an increase in prolonged mental health problems during the pandemic, especially in children. Psychological mishandling of learning assistance carried out by parents, for example, can result in substantial trauma to the child's physical and psychic development. This is part of the trauma that requires treatment with the right approach (Pearson & Nicholson, 2000).

Therefore, researchers designed a design of *trauma healing methods and literacy therapy* for children in elementary school age affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Trauma is an emotional reaction to horrific events such as accidents, abuse including natural disasters (Salamor, 2020). This method is a Telling-Writing which consists of a series of steps in the form of "I read, I listen, I express, I share, and I write".

This method utilizes a variety of thematic fairy tales presented in an interesting way, emotional mixing with various media, psychological consultation, and channeling children's psychological experiences through creative writing. Children's personal experiences during the pandemic can be a resource for the development of authentic and creative writing skills (Bergeron, 2019; Dong Cao & Li, 2020). This method is expected to be able to explore in-depth data on the psychological condition and trauma of students, factors inhibiting learning, discipline, and changes in student attitudes as well as a means of literacy therapy because the series of

activities cover the entire realm of basic literacy in the form of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. The right approach for children in providing *trauma healing* is very important because children tend to find it difficult to talk about the anxiety they feel.

METHODS

This research is an experimental study because the researcher will provide treatment or action in the form of a Fairy Tale Writing program to a sample of research members. This research is an experimental study because the researcher will provide treatment or action in the form of a Fairy Tale Writing program to a sample of research members. Below, I will provide a more detailed explanation of why this study can be categorized as an experimental study:

Control of Variables: In experimental research, the researcher has greater control over the variables that influence the outcomes. In this case, the researcher can control various factors such as the teaching method, the content taught, and the conditions of implementing the Fairy Tale Writing program.

Treatment and Control: In this study, the researcher provides a treatment in the form of the Fairy Tale Writing program to a specific sample group, referred to as the experimental group. Additionally, the researcher may also have a control group that does not receive this treatment. This allows for a comparison of the outcomes between the two groups.

Randomization: In a good experimental study, researchers often use randomization to avoid bias in the allocation of participants into the experimental and control groups. This helps ensure that the groups have similar initial characteristics.

Measurement of Outcomes: In experimental studies, researchers systematically measure the outcomes of the treatment. In this case, outcomes might include improvements in the ability to write fairy tales, enhanced narrative comprehension, or other relevant changes.

Statistical Analysis: Experimental research often involves statistical analysis to test whether the differences in outcomes between the experimental and control groups are statistically significant. This helps researchers determine if the Fairy Tale Writing program has a significant impact.

Causality: One of the primary goals of experimental research is to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the treatment (Fairy Tale Writing program) and the observed outcomes. Thus, this research can help indicate whether the program genuinely contributes to the observed changes in the experimental group.

Replication: Well-conducted experimental studies can be replicated by other researchers to verify their

findings, thereby increasing confidence in the results.

In summary, this experimental study on the Fairy Tale Writing program is designed to test hypotheses regarding the program's effectiveness and to identify whether there is a significant impact on the ability to write fairy tales among the members of the experimental group. Kerlinger in Hastjartjo (2019) explained that experimental research is carried out by manipulation and control of one or more variables and making observations of other variables. Comparative data were carried out between pre-research and post-research attitudes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Children's Mental Health should be the Main Focus in the Early Days of Learning

Houfman (2021) in his scientific article in the journal *Humanistic Psychology* said that in dealing with children affected by the pandemic both in terms of learning ability and psychic aspects, it takes a deep digging first into the emotional state of a student. The understanding of human emotions is the basis of the existential-humanistic approach in the world of psychology. Focusing on improving literacy and numeracy skills is not recommended because such treatment is considered symptom-oriented and short-term intervention.

To explore children's emotions, teachers must have the urge to be curious and able to persevere in hearing carefully the child's emotional expressions through the stories they tell (Hamdy, 2004). In other words, the storytelling method is a highly recommended method in extracting post-pandemic emotions in students.

The Complexities of the Periphery and the Fate of Children's Education during the Pandemic

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency of Banyumas Regency (2021), Lumbir District, which is located on the western border of Banyumas, has the fourth highest number of poor people in Banyumas. The high poverty rate forces many of its citizens to work in big cities or become migrant workers abroad. That way, many children in Lumbir Subdistrict do not live with complete parents because their father, or mother, or mother's two fathers have to work outside the city during the implementation of PJJ. 53% of the students at the study site did not live with a complete biological parent. One of their parents worked out of town or abroad. 36% did not live with their parents because both parents worked and or died. 92% of students belong to families with a lower-middle-class economy. This group of students on average does not have adequate learning facilities for PJJ.

Many Primary School children live with their

guardians such as grandparents, uncles, aunts or older siblings (Karimli et al., 2012). They are the ones who became learning companions when Covid-19 hit. And unfortunately, they are not a technologically 'literate' class of society. In addition to the problem of learning companions, border areas must also face the problem of the availability of learning facilities and technology. Many villages in Lumir have no internet signal available and lack ownership of devices for PJJ facilities. Siregar (2021) said that changes in life patterns that are more shifting to the use of internet technology affect the social behavior patterns of rural communities. For people who are not ready for this change, it can lead to social jealousy and increase the gap of social differences.

Adaptation of Teachers and Schools in Lumir Subdistrict as Banyumas Border District

Teachers and schools in border areas are trying to adapt during the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers start by adapting to the use of technology in the learning process. One form of adaptation is to optimize the use of gadgets and the internet in the learning process (Lindawati & Rahman, 2020; Pang et al., 2021). Every school has been facilitated *with wifi* but the Lumir area is an area that has not been reached by both GSM and internet signal providers. This presents its own challenges for students.

At the beginning of PJJ, students will look for signals to higher areas for the collection of existing assignments. In addition, a group learning system is also implemented. Students do not need to go to school, but they are grouped by the school to study in a place together with their closest friends with a very limited number and pay attention to health protocols during the pandemic. In this case, the role of Teaching Campus students is very helpful for the learning process with existing limitations. The group will be visited by teachers and students of the Teaching Campus.

Due to changes in learning patterns that integrate technology and the internet, teachers' ability to operate technology-based teaching media has increased. In certain situations, the teacher seeks to make a video to complete a task. This certainly expands the ability of teachers to use gadgets to support the learning process.

Teachers and schools are also adapting the curriculum. Teachers are more implementing the Emergency Curriculum in the sense that teachers simplify learning outcomes. Teachers do not aim to complete every competency in each learning unit but rather emphasize improving students' literacy and numeracy aspects with meaningful and fun activities.

Teachers also make adaptations in communication with parents. During active learning hours, which are from 7 am to 14.00, teachers are always on standby to serve questions given by parents along with the

problems they face in providing assistance. In this case, the teacher not only gives direction related to the task, but also complex problems that arise related to the handling of student learning.

Psychological Impact of Pandemic and PJJ for Students

During online learning, students tend to often get counterproductive treatment and actually increase students' distress levels when they experience difficulties in learning from a learning companion in a home environment (Biggs Tang & Kennedy, 2022). The average parent tends to leave everything to the student to independently complete the schoolwork given due to the lack of knowledge of the learning companion to the material and technological media used (Yates et al., 2021). Others responded with aggressive and blaming.

Some indicators of psychological aspects affected by the pandemic include:

a. Decreased Learning Motivation

93% of students do not yet have discipline and learning skills. Many of them consider PP as part of a holiday. With the lack of learning assistance during PJJ, students' motivation to deepen understanding of school subjects has decreased.

b. Decreased Student Concentration Power

Learning concentration is related to the concentration of students' thoughts, attention and or awareness to explore the content of the material or the teaching process given. Students who have a high concentration of learning will be able to put aside things that are not related to the learning activities they face. From the results of the data mining carried out, the decrease in student concentration power occurred very significantly. The average student only takes a maximum of one hour per day to complete the tasks assigned by the teacher. Even then, it is done with compulsion (without the motivation to learn).

c. Changes in Social Attitudes

The pandemic forced students to stay indoors. In fact, elementary school period is a time of building basic social skills. Pandemic conditions also affect students' attitudes in interacting with others. One clear indicator to measure the impact of this social attitude ability is to compare small class groups who at the time of entering school are not directly exposed to the social world. Their generation seems to lack the social skills that are generally possessed by students who are exposed on a daily basis in normal social and residential settings. Among them do not have the ability to say hello, start a conversation, ask for permission, the attitude of passing other older people while walking or running (as part of eastern culture), sensitivity to sharing, how to talk, etc. the average of these children experiences social awkwardness.

d. Device Dependence and Abuse

The results of observations and interviews conducted by the research team in Banyumas Regency found quite surprising facts. In Banyumas, there is an increase in the phenomenon of teenage students who often *hang out* around ATMs and it turns out that what they do is remittances for gambling activities. In addition to gambling, many of the school children are experiencing an increased dependence on gadgets to do *online games* which also often use a certain amount of money to play in them.

In the Lumbir elementary schools where our research is located, there is also an attitude of dependence and misuse of gadgets even though there is no indication that they are used for gambling activities. Dependence and misuse of gadgets occurs in students who have had access to their own smartphones. The figure reaches 74% of students already have access to mobile phone control with very minimal supervision by parents/guardians due to the lack of parent/guardian knowledge of the applications used by their children.

e. Anxiety in Children

Researchers also found symptoms of anxiety. This anxiety is divided into two, namely anxiety related to Covid-19 and learning anxiety. Some of the factors that influence anxiety first include witnessing family members who contracted Covid, lost relatives to Covid, witnessed neighbors who died from Covid, and the intensity and massiveness of news about Covid-19 victims in the media. Learning anxiety is due to the improper mentoring process carried out by parents (Kartel, 2022; Abdurrahmansyah, 2022). Almost all students expressed their fears when they had to study accompanied by a guardian. Students experience anxiety every time they do the questions given by the teacher. With this sense of anxiety, they cannot absorb the material properly.

Impact of Pandemic and PJJ on Students' Literacy Skills

The results showed that learning *loss* in students in research places was equivalent to one year of study. This is conveyed by the teacher and by looking at the learning outcomes of the students. This learning loss time is longer than the survey conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture in early 2022, namely on a national scale, learning loss is equivalent to 6 months of learning.

Telling-Writing Technique as a Humanistic Approach to Handling Children Affected by the Pandemic

The application of the Telling-Writing Technique has proven to be a means of extracting information on the impact of the pandemic and PJJ on children. Children's pandemic stories are the key to the beginning of information mining for teachers in

analyzing problems and determining intervention steps that can be done. And interestingly, storytelling or storytelling both orally and in writing has become a very close literacy medium for people almost all over the world and has even been used for thousands of years as a traditional literacy medium (Juanda, 2018). The scheme of extracting children's emotions through pandemic stories indirectly changed the view from "pandemic as a disaster" to "pandemic experience as a learning resource". Every child has their own pandemic story that is very personal, unique, and has its own context.

Some Lumbir students talked about the implementation of the group study process in an empty house that rose somewhat in the hills to get an internet signal. A student told a very innocent story, how during the pandemic, he, who was supposed to be at home, because of his boredom, actually settled down to go to the river to play in the water while fishing (Deakin, 2021). When found by his mother, he was taken home, and the child innocently told stories, managed to climb the wall of the house and return to the river. Some students told stories about the experiences of their family members who were infected with covid and how their families followed the protocols they should have when they were convicted of covid. There are also stories of how students endure their longing when their father or mother cannot go home on Eid due to pandemic restrictions.

Their process of building stories, listening to stories, expressing experiences, and writing down experiences during the pandemic becomes data for schools, in this case teachers, to understand their spiritual situation, determine the best treatment, and at the same time, become a literacy activity in the form of channeling psychological experiences through creative writing (Rokhyanto, Salamah, & Sari, 2020).

After a series of processes, the indications of *affective filters* in the form of psychological blocks (Krashen, 1986; Henry et al., 2023) that students feel such as anxiety, distrust, and low motivation have proven to be eroding. Students look very cheerful in the process of implementing Fairy Tales. The process of extracting deep information and *space* for students to express their deep feelings is able to channel the affective filter they have.

By using the method of the writing fairy tale technique, it turns out to be able to explore in-depth data about the psychological condition and trauma of students, factors that hinder learning, discipline, and changes in student attitudes as well as a means of literacy therapy because the series of activities cover the entire realm of basic literacy in the form of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. For this reason, this series of activities can be a model for literacy and psychological therapy for students affected by the

pandemic.

CONCLUSION

The psychological impact of the pandemic and PJJ includes a decrease in learning motivation, a decrease in learning concentration, changes in social attitudes, dependence and abuse of gadgets, and anxiety. In the literacy aspect, *there is a learning loss* equivalent to one year of learning stagnation. The series of Telling-Writing Techniques has proven to be able to erode the *affective filter* of new students and the psychological blocks that students feel in the form of subduing learning motivation, self-distrust, and anxiety due to covid and learning anxiety. Their process of building stories, listening to stories, expressing experiences, and writing down experiences during the pandemic becomes data for schools, in this case teachers, to understand their spiritual situation, determine the best treatment, and at the same time, become literacy activities in the form of channeling psychological experiences through creative writing.

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