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Emotional Awareness and School Connectedness: A Preliminary Study Among Students in Indonesia

Irwan Nuryana Kurniawan^a, & Wanadya Ayu Krishna Dewi^{a*}

^a Universitas Islam Indonesia

Abstract

Problem Statement: Can emotional awareness facilitate school connectedness? **Research Questions:** Can emotional awareness facilitate school connectedness? **Purpose of the Study:** To examine whether emotional awareness can facilitate school connectedness. **Research Methods:** Three hundred seventy two junior high school students, ages 13-16, completed measures on school connectedness ($\alpha=0,773$ 17 items) and emotional awareness ($\alpha=0,704$ 16 items). **Findings:** The result indicates that students' general perception of their relationship to school can be explained by their capability of identifying their own and others' emotions. **Conclusions:** This study shows that the students' general perception of their relationship to school can be explained by their capability of identifying their own and others' emotions.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +0-000-000-0000 ; fax: +0-000-000-0000 .
E-mail address: wanadya_akd@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

School connectedness, is the general perception of students about his relation with school (Anderson-Butcher, Amorose, Iachini, & Ball, 2013), which is essential for students and should be an attentuative subject among the school board. A series of studies on junior and high school students indicates improvement within the quality, quantity and strong school connectedness experiences are related to the increase of grades, high academic performance and graduates among high school students.

Kaminski, Puddy, Hall, Cashman, Crosby, & Ortega (2010) found that school connectedness has become one of the significant predictors for self directed violence among adolescents. Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Perry (2003) also found that school connectedness as one of the potential intervention strategies for peer harassment prevention program. Loukas, Ripperger-Suhler, & Horton (2009) found that adjustment problems among early adolescents can be predicted significantly by school connectedness. McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum (2002) perceives school connectedness as a protective factor related to important school outcomes.

Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins (2004) has emphasized the importance of school connectedness in promoting a healthy development and to prevent problematic behaviors. The importance of the students' connectedness to school within the context of a prevention program has also been stated by Jonson-Reid (2009) by naming it as *connection to school as an ounce of prevention*. For instance Jonson-Reid (2009) showed result of a study that promoting change within the school environment, especially those that are related to students' feeling of connectedness, as a more effective prevention strategy compared to the efforts in identifying each students needs. Davis-Alldritt (2012) stated that school connectedness, together with parent engagement, as an essential factor for the adolescents' health and achievement.

A preliminary study showed that school connectedness has still become a problem for the students in Indonesia (Kurniawan, 2014). Only 13,7% of the students reported often and always felt being an essential part of their school; only 19,1% has reported that they often and often felt that their opinions are important by their school peers, and only 20,7% students felt that the school members are often and always attentuative to their achievements. As much as 33,9% of the students reported that the school members never and also not very often knowing their capability to accomplish certain tasks successfully, and 61,8% of the students admitted to never or not very often being involved in several activities in their school.

This lack of school connectedness found in Indonesian students are assumed to be related to the poor ability to understand one's feelings, known as emotional awareness. Emotional awareness refers to an attentional process that is interconnected with some interpretative and evaluative functions. This attentional process not only enables us to monitor our emotions, but also to differentiate between various emotions in a qualitative sense; to locate their antecedents; and to acknowledge the physiological correlates of the emotion experience for what they are (Rieffe, Oosterveld, Miers, Terwogt, and Ly, 2008). Low emotional awareness has been related to alexithymia that is a condition of individuals who are unable to identify their own feelings; they also have trouble identifying the emotional state of others (Khodabakhsh, 2012). This leads to many social adjustment problems. Low emotional awareness predicted both depressive and anxiety symptoms for up to one year follow-up. These findings suggest that emotional awareness may constitute a transdiagnostic risk factor for the development and/or maintenance of symptoms of depression and anxiety, which has important implications for youth treatment and prevention programs (Abela, Elias, Selby, 2010). From depression and anxiety can lead to many problematic school problems such as low achievements, victimization among peers, eating problems and at its extreme, drug use among students.

On the same platform of problematic behaviors, poor emotional awareness and lack of school connectedness has been strongly related to problematic behavior among adolescents. In previous studies, the problems of the lack of school connectedness and poor emotion awareness among adolescents has lead to several common problems. As stated above, the lack of school connectedness among adolescents is found to be significant predictors for self directed violence among adolescents (Kaminski, Puddy, Hall, Cashman, Crosby, & Ortega, 2010). Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins (2004) has emphasized the importance of school connectedness in promoting a healthy development and to prevent problematic behaviors.

This study is aimed to understand the whether emotional awareness can promote school connectedness. This study tested the hypothesis that emotional awareness has a positive correlation with school connectedness.

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