

Understanding Children's Experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic



"Our children are the rock on which our future will be built, our greatest asset as a nation. They will be the leaders of our country." - Nelson Mandela



Based on UNICEF's report (2021), around **80 million Indonesian children** were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and **more than 25,000** among them became orphans.

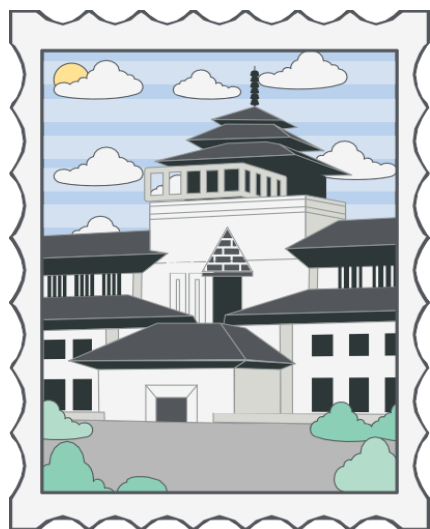
The pandemic also increased the number of school dropouts of children aged 7–17 years because (i) parents did not have money to pay for school fees (74%), (ii) the child was not interested in going to school (12%), (iii) children had to work during the economic crisis (2%), and (iv) other reasons (8%).

Children are the future leaders; to what extent have we been supporting them in facing the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?

This study attempts to provide space for children's voices and take note of their perspective in order to understand their needs and respond to child-related policies.

Objective

To understand the experiences and views of children during the COVID-19 pandemic, which are important information for future policy formulation



Methodology

This study uses a qualitative and participatory approach which focuses on three aspects: the impact of the pandemic on children's mental health, the impact of policies to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic, and the long-term impact of the pandemic on various aspects of a child's life.

Kota Bandung was chosen as the study area because of its rapid spread of COVID-19 and availability of institutions for children. In August 2021, Kota Bandung had more than 3,000 new cases of COVID-19 each day, which indicates that the community was both directly and indirectly impacted by the pandemic.

Data

Data was collected from 85 children aged between 11–17 years in Kota Bandung through focused group discussions, individual and group interviews, and photovoices.

Findings

1

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic **impacted children in various ways.**

4

Some children experience **fatigue, falling sick frequently, and significant weight gain** due to lack of physical activity and the decline of economic condition.

7

Limited facilities, such as computers, cell phones, and internet access, **prevent students from studying adequately.** This situation makes it even more difficult for children from the poor households group.

2

Children have various **negative feelings** due to the pandemic, such as sadness, boredom, fearfulness, and anxiousness.

5

Children who are better-off **have more ways to overcome frustration** caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as by trying out new hobbies.

8

Many families experience a decline in income due to disruption in parents' work or because of the death of a parent(s) from COVID-19.

3

The COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacted on relationships for children, especially with their peers.

6

Some children and their families **have received social assistance** from the government and donations from nongovernmental parties during the pandemic.



Recommendations



Policymakers could take various measures to help children facing a similar crisis, including:

- involve children in decision-making processes related to policies and programs that impact them;
- provide more attention to children's mental health;
- collaborate with relevant stakeholders to ensure that all children can access online education, especially for those who are living in poverty; and
- consider the appropriate economic assistance when formulating policies for families that are economically impacted by the crisis.

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