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Does Parent's Gender Shape Adolescent's Behavior? a Study among Indonesian Migrant Worker Families Left Behind

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Abstract

Background: Migration is known of its contribution to overcome poverty. Despite the benefits, migrated parent(s) who leave their children behind, create a new shape of public health problem: adolescent problem behavior, i.e smoking, early sexual activities, unhealthy diet, poor physical activity, violence and criminal.

Purpose: This research aims to define the relationship of parent's gender and the length of working period of parent overseas, to adolescent behavior.

Method: This observational survey use cross-sectional design, involves 65 respondents of adolescent in Gumelar sub-district, part of Banyumas District in Central Java, Indonesia. Four villages are chosen to represent the sub-district situation. Data collected is analysed in univariate, bivariate and multivariate.

Results: Multivariate analysis result shows the Odds Ratio (OR) value of the variable parents who work abroad is 16.5. It means that mothers who work abroad will cause teens to have risk behaviors by 16.5 times higher than teens who were left by fathers for working overseas.

Conclusion: Mothers who work abroad increase the potential for adolescents 16.5 times more likely to have risky behavior, compared to if fathers left overseas.

Keywords: Children left behind, risk-behavior, Indonesian migrant workers

Introduction

Parents who migrate to other countries to work, despite getting remittances and other benefits, simultaneously also have a negative impact on health,

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change ties in the family and social environment and increase the burden on the health system¹. Migration becomes an event that can cause problems for families and children, because the separation of children from parents is the worst consequence of parental migration. Children in migrant worker families are the group most vulnerable to emotional and psychological stress, feelings of neglect, and low self-confidence. These three things have a very strong potential to undermine children's overall development and socialization patterns². The international organization, UNICEF - UNDP, in 2006 specifically conducted a review of the impact of remittances on children and women in migrant households in the countries of origin of migrant workers,

which shows that parental migration poses a risk to children and impacts on children's rights that cannot be resolved only by remittance³.

Adolescent is a phase where a person experiences big changes in social interactions and relationships with others. This period is a phase in an individual's life, and not a permanent period, a phase in which the individual is no longer a child, but also has not yet reached adulthood⁴. During adolescence also changes the relationship between children (adolescents) with parents⁵. The child's relationship with the family, especially the child's relationship with the mother, will affect the child's early emotional development⁶.

Method

Research Design: This research is a cross sectional study conducted in 4 villages in Gumelar District, Banyumas Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The study were conducted from May to August 2019. The independent variables were parents who work abroad (father or mother), length period of parents working, and peer influence. The dependent variable is risk behavior in adolescent migrant worker children.

Population and Samples: The population in this study was 96 adolescents aged 11-18 years who were left behind by one of their parents working abroad. The sample selection is done by inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criterion is a parent has been working abroad for at least 6 months, the exclusion criterion is that when the research was carried out parent who worked abroad had been returned to Indonesia.

Sample Size: Total sampling technique was used and recruited 65 adolescents who meet the inclusion criteria.

Instruments: This study used a questionnaire of adolescent's risk behavior and factors that influence it. The questionnaire was compiled based on the main references from (1) Indonesian Demographic and Health Survey 2012⁹, (2) Adolescent Reproductive Health, compiled by the Central Statistics Agency, National Population and Family Planning Agency, Ministry of Health and ICF International, (2017) Youth Risk Behavior Survey compiled by the Center for Disease Control (CDC)¹², (3) Division of Adolescent and School Health, and (3) Global School-based Student Health

Survey (GSHS), compiled by WHO and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in collaboration with UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNAIDS

Data Collection: Structured interview was applied to collect data, done by interviewing respondents using the questionnaire.

Statistical Analysis: Data was analysed in (1) univariate, to describe each variable, (2) bivariate with Chi square test, carried out to select variables to be tested in the multivariate stage, and (3) multivariate, to analyze the variables that had the most influence on risk behavior in adolescent migrant worker children.

Result

Total of 65 respondents in this study were left behind adolescent aged between 11-18 years. The risk factors to their risky behavior analysed were (1) parent working abroad (migrant parent), (2) length of parent's working, and (3) influence of peers. Bivariate analysis was carried out to select variables to be included in multivariate analysis. The result of bivariate test is shown in Table 1.

Tabel 1: Risk Factors of Adolescent Risky Behavior

No	Variables	n	%	p - value
1.	Parent working abroad (migrant parent)			0,022*
	Mother	60	92.3	
	Father	5	7.7	
2.	Length of parent's working			0,259
	>3 yrs	45	69.2	
	≤3 yrs	20	30.8	
3.	Influence of peers			0,002*
	Risky	32	49.2	
	Not risky	33	50.8	

The variables included in the multivariate analysis stage were the variables with p value <0.25. The results of the bivariate analysis showed that the variable with a p value <0.25 were the variable of parents working abroad (0.022) and the peer influence (0.002). The variable of length of parent's working abroad had a p value of 0.259 so that was not included in the multivariate analysis. Multivariate analysis used multiple logistic regression prediction models. The result of multivariate analysis is shown in Tabel 2 as follows:

Table 2: Final Result of Multivariate Analysis

Variables	B	p-value	OR	95% CI
Parent working abroad (migrant parent)	2,806	0,033	16,5	1,2-215,7
Influence of peers	2,900	0,018	18,1	1,6-199,8

The result of multivariate analysis showed that variables significantly related to adolescent behavior were variables of parents who worked abroad and peers. The analysis results obtained Odds Ratio (OR) from the variable of parents who work abroad is 16.5, meaning that mothers who work abroad, as the risky category, will cause adolescent to be engaged in risky behavior by 16.5 times higher than those who were left by fathers who work abroad. Odds Ratio (OR) value of influence of peer variable is 18.1, meaning that peers who have risk behaviors will cause adolescent behavior to engage risky behavior by 18.1 higher than peers with no risk behaviors. The results of this initial modeling show that the two variables have a p value <0.05 so that the model is accepted as a model of relation between parent working abroad and influence of peers to adolescents behavior.

Discussion

One of negative effect of parent migration is changing ties in the family¹. It becomes an event that can cause problems for families and children, because the separation of children from parents is the worst consequence of parental migration. Children left behind (CLB) is the most vulnerable group to emotional and psychological pressure, feelings of neglect, and low self-confidence. These three things have a very strong potential to undermine children's overall development and socialization patterns².

UNICEF⁷ summarized effects of migration on children left behind. It differs fathers to mothers leaving overseas. When mothers migrate, it will affect children psycho social health, education, risk to be abused, domestic gender division and family break up. While the children left by fathers are more likely to be affected by poverty in female headed household which leads to a households vulnerability.

Adolescent, in particular, is also affected by parental migration. They often experience difficulties in social relationships and put themselves close in small groups with peers who have the same situation. They are also

often left together with responsibilities that are not resolved by their parents, regardless the mother or father migrate².

This study found that parent working overseas related to adolescent behavior. In particular, adolescent who are left by migrated mothers have higher potential to be engaged to risky behavior. Regarding the family structure, a research showed that family structure influences the experience of sexual intercourse in adolescents⁸. Smoking, alcohol consumption, and sexual behavior were found higher among adolescent in single parent families⁹.

Previous studies on children left behind are in line. It is found in South China the problems of risk behavior and suicidal ideation in CLB in rural areas¹⁰. The problem of mental disorders in CLB is also a problem in Sri Lanka¹¹. Other studies showed that migrating mothers are risk factors for the mental condition of their children^{12, 13}. A study in Italy concerning mothers and children who had been physically separated as mothers worked in other countries, and then reunited, showed that the length of time separated was relevant, because it led to change the meaning and family life between countries, which also change the role of children in the family¹⁴.

Parents, especially mothers, who work, are a threat to the relationship between parents and children. If the child is entrusted to the caregiver and the child feels happy, then the mother will feel unhappy. Meanwhile, if the child feels unhappy and happy with the caregiver, the child will hate the mother or parents who do not care for him¹⁵.

Other finding of this study is the influence of peers on adolescent risky behavior. Risk behavior is a type of behavior that endangers health and tends to increase in adolescence⁵. Increased involvement in health risk behaviors is a marker of adolescence. Factors that encourage adolescents to take risks on themselves are social and cultural factors, including changes in family, poverty and racism¹⁶. Include in risky behaviors are: tobacco consumption, poor diet, low physical activity,

alcohol consumption, drug abuse, sexual behavior and risky behavior in accidents. These risky behaviors are the biggest causes of adolescent death which generally begin early in adolescence and peak at the end of adolescence and early twenties¹⁷.

Although it against the norm, some risky behaviors are behaviors that adolescents learn from their social environment, supported by their social environment, and can be controlled both individually and by their social environment. These behaviors also have a special function for adolescents in achieving normal development goals: to show the independence of their parents, to be accepted by their peers, reject conventional values in their environment, and perhaps the most important thing is to be a marker of changing to become more mature¹⁸.

Understanding the impact of risky behaviors during adolescence to their future, it needs to highlight that family is always the most important social influence for children, although they have developed relationships with the environment outside the home. Close relationships in family will have more influence on children than other social influences. Children are also more dependent on parents for safety and happiness. If the child's relationship with parents deteriorates, the consequences will be bad, too. In particular, the relationship between mother and child has a stronger influence. This is because to most mothers the child is very dependent¹⁵.

Study Limitations: This study did not analyse the age of respondents when they were left behind, so that the study cannot explain whether the behavior among respondents is a natural expression due to a lifespan development or caused by migrated parent in particular. It is suggested to next studies to search further of the impact of migrated parent to the behavior of children left behind in every stage of age. This study then expected to recommend community how to respond the needs of children left behind of affection from family, caregiver, or community.

Conclusion

Parent, in particular mothers, who work abroad, and influence of peer increase the potential for adolescents to have risky behavior. When migrating is inevitable, it is important to maintain the family relationship even though there is a distance between parent overseas and the children in home country. Adolescent, especially, needs to be supported to undergoing their journey of lifespan.

So that they can get through the conflicts and achieve the highest standard of well-being.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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Ethical Clearance: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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