

Differences in Anxiety Levels about Competition and Social Competence between Students of Regular Class and Accelerated Class

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Abstract

The study aimed at finding out whether there were differences on anxiety about competition and social competence between students of regular class and accelerated class.

Participants for the study were 36 seventh grade students of junior high school in Semarang. 18 students were in regular class and 18 in accelerated class.

Data of the study was collected using two questionnaires on anxiety about competition and social competence. The collected data was analyzed by using t test. The values obtained from the analysis were $t = 2,260$ and $p < 0,05$, $t = -1,133$ and $p > 0,05$, meaning that there was significant difference in anxiety about competition between students of regular class and accelerated class, but no difference about social competence between regular class and acceleration class.

Keywords : anxiety to the competition, social competence

INTRODUCTION

Up to now, the Indonesian education system oriented to quantity, to be able to serve many students in the classroom. This particular education system has some advantages, such as being able to serve students who have the same ability, which not only saves tuition fees, but also make students socialize with others from different backgrounds in their class. By socializing, students will gain more social adaptation experience. If we take a close look at it, we can find some weaknesses. This class system cannot fulfill students' curiosity needs, especially for outstanding students.

On the other hand, the schools providing service to students who have high ability, intelligence, and great talent is mushrooming. They set a program especially for students who have intellectual abilities above the average students. That kind of education, named as accelerated program, can be completed faster than the regular one. In this accelerated program, students can finish three years or six semesters of education in only two years or four semesters.

Accelerated program itself has many advantages. First, it can increase learning efficiency because it has the same curriculum as the regular program, only it is faster. Besides, it prioritizes recognition towards students' achievement, saves time to pursue a career, increases motivation; because students have almost the same needs to study, it increases students' self confidence because their activities are more geared towards independent problem-solving or to practice on their own. This program also gives stimulation towards students' intellectual development, gives them a lot of time to concentrate on their interests.

Yet, there are things to be considered further. The accelerated program compresses material prepared for six semesters to be completed in four semesters. Students who have no ability to adapt will not achieve based on their abilities. Facing those compressed materials needs above average intellectual ability, maturity in dealing with emotion, and social competence. Some feedback from parents indicates that their children joining accelerated program seem to find it difficult to adjust themselves to the compressed materials. This is reflected in their behavior, such as, getting angry easier, complaining about their being tired, looking less healthy and gloomy, also anxiety and complaints about dealing with competition between friends. The symptoms of stress dealing with competition are the raising of their emotions before examination, the feeling of nausea, and the feeling of dizziness. The lack of time means having less social relationship with their peers, and they tend to withdraw themselves, become selfish, and care less about their surroundings.

This research is a study of teenagers who join accelerated and regular program at a Junior High School in Semarang.

Competition is to compete with each other, between two individuals or group to reach the same goal. It contains strong personal involvement to struggle. In a certain situation, competition is useful to give positive results. Johnson & Johnson (cited in Anjarsari, 2002) said that competition can increase students' ability in skills practice at assignments which are easy and require speed. Competition can also create a situation where someone does not think to ask somebody else's help.

Monks et al (1994) said that teenagers realize that there is social pressure and the need for social relationship in their teenage life. In this life, teenagers have begun to develop their social competence to be accepted by their peers. At this stage of life, social aspect develops very fast which is shown by grouping movement with their peers, where this will affect their interests, values, as well as their attitude. Social experiences of teenagers will affect their social capability, because they have to face various kinds of characters and social backgrounds in this interaction process with people. Therefore, teenagers need to have initiative to be able to develop and take care of their social relationship with others. This is called social competence (de Clereq, 1994). The strong will in this period is that their peers accept them, so that they feel needed and appreciated. This gives them the will to exercise initiative to explore their social competence. On the other hand, their peer rejection will cause them less certainty with their ability and they tend to avoid social relationships. The peer acceptance and rejection will trigger social learning process that causes them to be active in their social roles which can increase teenagers' social competence (Hurlock, 1990). The most general definitions of social competence refer to adaptive functioning in which environment and personal resources were used to achieve desirable developmental outcomes within interpersonal contexts (Waters & Sroufe, 1983). Individuals who develop these capabilities

often possess sound judgment and the ability to manage circumstances to benefit themselves and others in social situation. Any general definition of social competence, therefore, must also consider the impact of the person on the social environment as well as the influence of the social context on the individual (Dodge et al, 1986). Such conceptions make it clear that social competence develops within the context of transactional process between the developing person and the surrounding social context (Lerner, 1987). Competent adolescents, therefore, are neither passive recipients nor passive reactors to stimuli but are both active and reactive agents to their developmental and environmental circumstances. Peterson & Leigh (1990) defined social competence as the ability to be effective in the realization of social goals. The social outcomes include having friends, being popular or liked by other children, and engaging in effective social interaction with peers. Bloom (1990) indicated that social competence involves possessing and using the ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behavior to achieve social tasks and outcomes valued in the host context and cultures. In the school setting, these tasks and outcomes would include accessing the school curriculum successfully, meeting associated personal social and emotional needs, and developing transferable skills and valued attitudes beyond school. Very different social competencies are required and valued in different contexts. Behaviors that are dysfunctional and disapproved of in one context might be functional and approved of in another. Through thinking and feeling, the socially competent person is able to select and control which behaviors to emit and which to suppress in a given context, to achieve an objective set by themselves or prescribed by others (Peterson & Leigh, 1990).

A question occurs, based on the problems above, whether there are differences in anxiety about competition and social competence between students of regular class and accelerated class of SLTP II Semarang (State Junior High II Semarang).

The purpose of this research is to acknowledge differences in anxiety about competition and social competence between students of regular class and accelerated class of SLTP II Semarang (State Junior High II Semarang).

METHOD

Subjects

Thirty-six junior high school students at Semarang participated in this study, which included one regular class and one accelerated class.

Materials

The social competence questionnaire includes fifty-two items, with three aspects included, first aspect is internal resources which include positive self-esteem, internal locus of control, social perspective taking, and interpersonal problem solving (cited in Widyorini, 2002). Positive self-esteem functions as a basis for socially adaptive behavior by providing adolescents with sufficient self-confidence to engage in and expand their social relationships (Openshaws & Thomas, 1986). An internal locus of control, or feeling of exercising control over one's life circumstances, encourages self initiative and development of leadership skills in interpersonal settings (Adams,1983). Social perspective taking (social role taking and empathy), on the other hand, encourages adolescents to understand and become sensitive to feelings, intentions, and abilities of others (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). Finally, social adaptation also requires the development of interpersonal problem solving skills. Specifically, socially competent adolescents are often more capable of (a) being sensitive to interpersonal problems situations, (b) generating alternative solutions, (c) planning for attainment of interpersonal goals, (d) weighing consequences in terms of their effectiveness and social acceptability, and (e) perceiving cause and effect relations in interpersonal events (Shure, 1981). Second aspect of social competence is a balance between sociability (or togetherness) and individuality (or autonomy). These seemingly contradictory aspects of the

human experience are actually complementary functions that contribute to interpersonal competence during all phases of life. The sociability function involves the process of connecting and integrating with significant others or tendencies toward “communion” that guide adolescents to form close relationships with others (Dyk & Adams, 1987). The individuality function refers to becoming somewhat unique and differentiated and having freedom of action from others. A third aspect of social competence is the social skills of adolescents regarding peers, refers to application of previously specified interpersonal resources in a successful manner with age-mates. Such a focus examines the nature of the status, acceptance, and social skills demonstrated by adolescents within the peer group (Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, & Brown, 1986). Such an approach focuses on the behavioral repertoires that adolescents acquire for adaptation and acceptance beyond family boundaries in reference to peers. Each item is scored on a three-point scale ranging from never, seldom and always (the total score range is 52 – 156).

Anxiety about competition questionnaire includes thirty-five items. With two aspects, physical anxiety symptom and psychological anxiety symptom. Each item is scored on a four - point, scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (the total test score range is 35 – 140).

Procedure

The headmasters of the schools were contacted and approval was requested for some classes to participate in this study. Once the approval was obtained, one regular class and one accelerated class was selected for participation. The headmasters contacted class teachers, asking if they were willing to provide some regular class time for the researcher to carry out this study. All students attending the selected classes were involved in this study. They completed the social competence questionnaire and anxiety about competition questionnaire

during regular class time. The time taken for completing the social competence questionnaire and anxiety about competition questionnaire was within 60 minutes.

Data Analysis

SPSS procedures were used in the data analysis. Product moment correlation was used to measure items validity of social competence questionnaire and anxiety about competition questionnaire. Hoyt test was used to measure the reliability of social competence questionnaire and anxiety about competition questionnaire. t test was used to measure differences between students of regular class and accelerated class on anxiety about competition and social competence.

RESULTS

Concerning the validity items of social competence questionnaire, results indicated out of 52 items 23 items were valid and out of 35 items on anxiety about competition questionnaire 28 items were valid.

Concerning the reliability of social competence questionnaire, coefficients correlation for social competence questionnaire was 0,867 and coefficients correlation for anxiety about competition questionnaire was 0,824.

The collected data was analyzed by using t test, the values obtained from the analysis were $t = 2,260$ and $p < 0,05$, $t = -1,133$ and $p > 0,05$, meaning that there was significant difference in anxiety about competition between students of regular class and accelerated class, but no difference in social competence between regular class and acceleration class.

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis in this research that there are differences on anxiety about competition between students of regular class and accelerated class participating in this research is accepted.

Competition is to compete with each other between two individuals or group to reach the same goal. It contains strong personal involvement to struggle. In a certain situation, competition is useful to give positive results. Johnson & Johnson (cited in Anjarsari, 2002) said that competition can increase students' ability in skills practice at assignments which are easy and require speed to do. Competition can also create a situation where someone does not think to ask somebody else's help.

Students will get high anxiety if competition is a consideration in a situation full of demands beyond their own ability or dangerous for them. Students who have the required ability will get low anxiety if competition is a consideration in a threatening situation. Students joining accelerated program are considered intellectually intelligent. They have three characteristics, such as, having above average ability, creativity, and task commitment. As a result, high competition enables those students to be more challenged to excel because they consider their competition condition as a challenge as they have required resources. That makes anxiety about the competition lower than that for students from regular class. Regular students (mean : 64,722) have higher anxiety rate than accelerated students (mean : 57,667). Competition will encourage students, who are classified as gifted, in accelerated class to reach maximum goal. High competition for regular class students will cause high anxiety.

It is discovered, based on data analysis, that hypothesis stating the differences of social competence between students of acceleration and students of regular class in this research is rejected.

Social competence is connected to individual adaptive function. That individual has ability to interact with his social surrounding, to play their role precisely and to be able to use opportunities in their surroundings. Social competency is also connected to the evaluation ability towards emotional response, cognition, and behavior in relation to social demand faced by individuals. Teenagers' social competence development deals with acceptance and

rejection from their social surroundings. Social surrounding acceptance towards teenagers will cause them to take the initiative to give idea contribution or to help their friends. According to Martha and Rolf, the ability to take initiative encourages teenagers to be exploratory ending in social competence. On the contrary, peer rejection will lead to disappointment causing lowering of self-confidence so that teenagers avoid social relationships. According to de Clereq (1994) social rejection by peers is an important risk factor in social competence development. Bloom (cited in Widyorini, 2002) said that social surroundings and culture influence social competence very much. Everybody will give reinforcement if somebody gives expected behavior and will give punishment if somebody's behavior is inappropriate. It burdens the teenagers, they try to obey.

CONCLUSION

The result of the data analysis, which was explained above, shows that there are differences on anxiety about competition between students of regular class and accelerated class. On the other hand, there were no differences in social competence between students of accelerated class and students of regular class in this research study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are some recommendations arising from this study:

1. It is time for schools, which hold accelerated program, to make suitable selection of students who will join it.
2. It is necessary that schools pay more attention to factors supporting the success of learning program, such as, competent teachers and suitable student selection.
3. It is advisable that other researchers consider increasing the research sample size to include some schools which have accelerated program.

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