



## Empathy and Preventing Discrimination Against Covid-19 (Building Empathy and Preventing Discrimination Against Covid-19 by Junior High School Students)

Ratu Laura M.B.P; Vinta Sevilla; Ratu Nadya W

Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i1.3372>

### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic is still happening all over the world. Until now, it still hasn't shown that the pandemic will end, because cases of this virus are still going up and down and several new virus variants have even been discovered. In certain cases, there are still restrictions on visits to and from certain countries, in order to break the chain of spread of this case. This situation then gave rise to a new phenomenon in society, namely social stigma or negative associations against a person or group of people suffering from Covid-19. They are labeled, stereotyped, discriminated against, treated differently, and experience status harassment because of their association with the coronavirus. The purpose of this study is to find out how to understand empathy and how to deal with people suffering from Covid-19 by students of SMPN 88 West Jakarta. The method used is qualitative. The results obtained are that students can understand and apply empathetic behavior to family and others when suffering from Covid-19.

**Keywords:** *Covid-19; Empathy; Discrimination; Stereotypes*

### **Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic until now, October 2021, is still happening all over the world. Until now, it still hasn't shown that the pandemic will end, because cases of this virus are still going up and down and several new virus variants have even been discovered. In certain cases, there are still restrictions on visits to and from certain countries, in order to break the chain of spread of this case. The government, medical personnel, and the community continue to collaborate to tackle this virus, but the numbers continue to grow, making it impossible to break the chain of spread of this virus easily.

Quoted from [pfimegalife.co.id](http://pfimegalife.co.id), reports of positive cases of Covid-19 in Indonesia were first announced in March 2020. Two people who were found to be positively infected with the corona virus were residents of Depok, West Java. Both are suspected of contracting the corona virus after having direct contact with Japanese citizens. Since the discovery of the first positive case, the number of Indonesians infected with Covid-19 has continued to grow. The government has imposed a large-scale social restriction policy in several areas to restrict the movement of citizens. However, the spread of the corona virus in Indonesia continues to expand (pfimegalife, 2020). Until now, it has been more than a year that the world has experienced the Covid-19 Pandemic and has claimed many lives.

Reporting from the Liputan6.com page on Wednesday (03/03) 2021, the cumulative total in Indonesia to date is 1,353,834 people who have been confirmed positive for Corona Covid-19. The number of recovered cases increased by 9,053 today. So, the cumulative total is 1,169,916 people who have recovered and been declared negative for Corona Covid-19 in Indonesia so far (Prastiwi, 2021).

Based on data obtained from covid19.go.id which was accessed on October 29, 2021, until that day there were 683 additional cases, where this case was already sloping, but previously had jumped sharply on July 15, 2021 ago with the number of cases 56,757 cases. .

The occurrence of this Covid-19 outbreak has finally emerged a social phenomenon that has the potential to exacerbate the situation, namely social stigma or negative associations against a person or group of people who experience symptoms or have certain diseases. They are labeled, stereotyped, discriminated against, treated differently, and/or experience status harassment due to association with an illness (Dai, N.F., 2020, p. 67). This corona disease seems to be a very scary scourge so that people try to avoid those who have it.

As a virus that has not been discovered for a long time, there are still many people who still do not know this virus well. Moreover, humans tend to be afraid of something that is not yet known and it is easier to attribute fear to "different/other groups". This is what causes the emergence of social stigma and discrimination against certain ethnicities and also people who are considered to have a relationship with this virus (Dai, N.F., 2020, p. 67). But in principle, no human wants to be infected with this virus, and generally patients also don't know where they got it from.

Covid-19 has become very feared, even not all sufferers experience certain symptoms. Referred to as People Without Symptoms (OTG), those who appear healthy and fine can be carriers of this endemic virus. Without them knowing, they can indirectly transmit the virus they have.

There is a lot of unreliable information from social media that has caused stigma to Covid-19 sufferers, which we all know that this disease is very contagious and there is no cure (Abudi, R, et al. 2020, p. 78). People seem to avoid the sufferers because patients with this disease are considered dangerous.

Adolescence is the right age to be given learning and understanding about empathy. So that teenagers can know very well what is considered right and wrong and digest it to be implanted in them. In conditions like these, the patients and sufferers of Covid-19 need empathy, it's a shame when close relatives and people around them don't have a sense of empathy.

The focus of this research is how to understand empathy for Covid-19 sufferers by students of SMPN 88 West Jakarta, and how they deal with when people around them contract the virus.

## ***Literature Review***

Empathy comes from the word *empathia* which means to feel. The term empathy was originally used by aesthetic theorists to describe a person's subjective experience. An American psychologist, E. B. Titchener, uses the term motor mimicry as a term for empathy, empathy also comes from physical imitation of the burdens of others which ultimately creates the same/similar feeling that exists within a person (Goleman, 1996, p. 139).

Empathy is also described from how a person is able to position himself as another person, so that he can feel with comprehensive emotions and help when people around him are having difficulties. In Umar's explanation (Umar, 1992, p. 68) empathy is a tendency felt by someone to feel something that other people do if he is in someone else's situation.

In everyday life, it is not easy to do and carry out this empathy. It can be said that empathy is the foundation in interactions with other humans. So it takes good skills to carry out empathy in life.

### **Method**

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. While the subjects of this study were students of SMPN 88 West Jakarta. The research method is basically a scientific way to obtain data with a specific purpose and use (Sugiyono 2013, p. 2). Researchers use this method because they only want to describe a phenomenon or event that occurs. Descriptive research which is research conducted to find out certain circumstances or subjects, related to collecting facts. This research was conducted by interviewing resource persons as a data collection technique, and documentation study. Please note that this study does not seek or explain relationships nor does it test hypotheses or make predictions.

### **Results and Discussion**

Research activities are carried out by interviewing research subjects through the Google Meet platform by providing several questions that have been prepared by the research team. The questions given are open-ended questions.

The first question that was given to the research subject was about what the understanding of stereotypes was about. Stereotyping is an unbalanced assessment of a group of people. This assessment occurs because of the tendency to generalize without differentiation (Murdianto, 2018, p.139). In general, the informants of this study already have an understanding of stereotypes, and are able to explain what stereotypes are. In the interviews conducted, the informants understood very well the meaning of stereotypes because they had read through certain websites, and also the use of words in their daily lives, when there are things that resemble stereotyped actions/thoughts.

Informants in this study understand what discrimination is. During the interview, the participants told that in the past some of them had experienced inappropriate incidents related to discrimination, one of the informants' answers related to discrimination was that they were often ridiculed for wearing used clothes and books, but now they claim that they no longer experience discrimination.

Empathy is the ability to understand what another person is feeling, see from that person's point of view, and also imagine yourself in that person's position. Empathy plays an important role in building and maintaining relationships between human beings (Nareza, 2020).

Informants in this study have families who have suffered from Covid-19, and at that time the informants and their families are self-isolating, and do not alienate families who are suffering from Covid-19. It's just that they move to the family home and or space apart. In everyday life, informants pay attention with an attitude of providing all the needs of families exposed to Covid-19 and provide emotional encouragement. This is because they feel that their family/relatives need support from the surrounding environment. On the other hand, they also help other relatives who are exposed to Covid-19, but still maintain health protocols.

Furthermore, regarding the bad experiences experienced while having family/relatives affected by Covid-19, the informants in this study did not have bad experiences, but answered that their families were quite shocked but other people around them were still willing to help when they encountered this disaster.

As for some of the informants in this study, the families who were exposed were their parents, and most of them stated that they felt grateful to have many friends, neighbors and relatives who were not

even at home very concerned about their situation when their family was exposed to the virus. The people volunteered to send food, vitamins and medicine.

With this experience, participants realized the importance of being empathetic towards others. They even revealed that they would also be happy to help their acquaintances if anyone became infected with the corona virus. Participants felt sure that it was the duty of mankind to help each other without discriminating against their situation.

The experience of an informant when his brother was exposed to the Covid-19 virus, the implementation of a high sense of empathy and concern from the informant, they were together with their families to meet the needs of the exposed relatives. Such as sending medicines and sending oxygen cylinders during certain situations. This situation was well realized by the informants, because the situation and conditions finally encouraged them to jointly find a solution to the existing problems.

As for some of the benefits of having a high sense of empathy, namely:

### 1. Build social relationships

Empathy is needed to build social relationships with other people. With empathy, you will be able to understand what other people are thinking and feeling. You will also be trained to respond appropriately in all social situations.

### 2. Regulate your own emotions

Empathizing with others will also train you to control your emotions. That way, you will not easily feel stressed.

### 3. Practice helping behavior

When you empathize, you can imagine what it would be like to be in someone else's shoes. This will encourage you to do something that can ease the person's burden or problem.

Therefore, a sense of empathy is also useful for practicing mutual assistance or altruism among human beings. Empathy is also an important element in the delivery of the language of love (Nareza, 2020).

Reports in the mass media about the spread of the Covid-19 virus, which has not stopped until now, can indeed create and build fear in the community, including teenagers who are still in high school. The informants, who are all still in class IX, said that they often feel afraid when they see news about Covid-19.

Some news, such as isolating patients and people with the Covid-19 virus, so that the rejection of bodies infected with the virus is the most widely reported. And this is very unfortunate because public understanding and education about Covid-19 is still very low.

Empathy behavior in everyday life is manifested in four forms: 1) sensitive to other people's feelings, 2) imagining if I were him, 3) practicing sacrificing one's own, and 4) making other people happy. With these four forms of empathetic behavior, it is appropriate that there should be no rejection of bodies infected with Covid-19. The grief felt as a result of the death is not only sorrow for the families of the victims, but also for all components of the nation. Building empathy is part of efforts to strengthen the nation's character building to realize the vision of a golden Indonesia 2045 (Susari, 2020).

In general, the informants in this study already have an understanding of empathy, and what things can be done when experiencing Covid-19 or their relatives are exposed to the virus. With a very

early age, informants already have a high sense of sympathy and empathy for others. Where seen in the field, people with Covid-19 are often ostracized by their environment because they are considered to be transmitting the deadly virus.

In accordance with the experiences expressed by the informants, researchers can see the behavior carried out by these informants is none other than imitating the people around them, so they have a sense of empathy and tolerance. However, there is still a need for further learning and deeper understanding to avoid discrimination, certain stereotypes about Covid-19 patients and build their empathy from an early age.

### **Conclusion**

The informant's understanding of empathy for someone exposed to the Covid-19 virus in this study was in accordance with the rules and principles of empathy. Where the informant has applied it in a way of behaving. Meanwhile, the way the informants deal with them, when people around them are infected with the Covid-19 virus in this study, it was found that the informants did not hesitate and did not have excessive fear to directly help families who experienced this disaster. They do it voluntarily and think positively about the situation.

Students who as informants in this study are also the best targets to instill a sense of empathy for others, because empathy will become a habit when learned and given understanding from an early age. In addition, with a high sense of empathy, it can foster awareness and a sense of tolerance between others.

### **References**

- Abudi, A., Yasir, M., dan Magulili, A.N. 2020. Stigma Terhadap Orang Positif Covid-19. *Jambura Journal of Health Science and Research Universitas Gorontalo*. 78.
- Dai, N.F. 2020. Stigma Masyarakat Terhadap Pandemi Covid-19. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Problematika Sosial Pandemi Covid-19, Kendari*
- Pfimegalife, 2020. *Bagaimana Penyebaran Virus Corona Terjadi di Indonesia?* Diakses dari: <https://www.pfimegalife.co.id/literasi-keuangan/kesehatan/read/penyebaran-virus-corona>.
- Nareza. 2020. *Memahami Arti, Ciri-Ciri, dan Manfaat Empati*. Diakses dari: <https://www.alodokter.com/memahami-arti-ciri-ciri-dan-manfaat-empati>
- Murdianto. 2018. Stereotipe, Prasangka dan Resistensinya (Studi Kasus pada Etnis Madura dan Tionghoa di Indonesia). *Jurnal Qalamuna IAI Sunan Giri Ponorogo*, 10-02
- Prastiwi, D. 2021. *Positif Covid-19 Ada 1.353.834, Sembuh 1.169.916, Meninggal 36.721*. diakses dari: <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/4497301/update-rabu-3-maret-2021-positif-covid-19-ada-1353834-semuh-1169916-meninggal-36721>.
- Susari, H. 2020. *Membangun Empati di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19*. Diakses dari: <https://balitbangdiklat.kemenag.go.id/berita/membangun-empati-di-tengah-pandemi-covid-19>
- Peta sebaran covid-19. 2021. Diakses dari: <https://covid19.go.id/peta-sebaran>

Goleman, D. 1996. *Kecerdasan Emosional*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama

Umar, M dan Ahmad Ali. 1992. *Psikologi Umum*. Surabaya: Bina Ilmu.

Sugiyono. 2013. *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif dan R & D*. Bandung Alfabeta

### **Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).