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Letter to the editor

Students mental health during COVID-19: Comprehensive government and parental involvement in Indonesia



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Dear Editor,

Life is returning to "a new normal" after the two years of social and economic upheaval brought on by the COVID-19 (Tandon, 2022). When an unexpected epidemic with major mental health repercussions arose, it was imperative to quickly provide accurate and relevant information that could be used to guide mental health care and policy decisions (Tandon, 2021). Therefore, mental health issues is a significant concern, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic (Nuryana et al., 2021). It is a problem that should be taken seriously and resolved as quickly as possible, especially in the educational sector (Gonzalez Mendez et al., 2022; Nuryana, 2022; Samy et al., 2021). Alibudbud provide excellent recommendations for promoting student mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic (Alibudbud, 2021). The authors concur that some of the suggested ways to promote mental health during online learning include the use of the camera only, when necessary. However, there are some critical notes that may provide additional insight on how to approach this issue. Firstly, the use of the camera only when necessary, during online learning can indeed help alleviate mental stress by allowing students to see their friends' faces, but problems will arise in a large country such as Indonesia due to its separate islands with an unsupportive environment and an inability to obtain an adequate internet connection. Secondly, some students do not want to be seen by others or their immediate environment, they use online learning exclusively in their private bedroom and do not want anyone else to see it. Also, they care about their socioeconomic status and do not want others to judge them based on their living conditions (Neuwirth et al., 2021). The authors interested in broadening horizons in education, particularly in policy, in order to broaden the scope of this promotion.

First, Governance and leadership. Government policies aimed at dealing with COVID-19 are highly anticipated in an archipelagic country, such as Indonesia. Government and school leaders play a critical role in this process. Some of the insights conveyed by Alibudbud may not be as productive without the support of the government through emergency policies. According to a July 2020 survey in Indonesia of over 3200 elementary to high school students, about 13 % of respondents experienced symptoms associated with mild to severe stress disorder and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during online

learning (Wijaya, 2021). Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia issued a Circular Letter 719/P/2020 on Emergency Curriculum Policy. The application of the curriculum in special circumstances aims to provide educational units with the flexibility to design the curriculum to students' learning needs.

Second, Parental involvement and learning experiences at home. The level of parental involvement in the school system and the variety of new forms of technology used during COVID-19 provide a sizable legacy that should not be overlooked. Parental involvement can assist students in reducing tension during online learning and preserve their mental health (Breslin, 2021). It has also long been recognized as beneficial to academic achievement, despite the numerous barriers that prevent parents from participating in school, specifically those from disadvantaged backgrounds. There are implications in the strategies used by teachers to effectively engage parents in the education of their children during online learning. This effort will undoubtedly aid in the improvement of students' mental health during online learning.

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