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Counseling guidance in improving family stability in facing a covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to provide a clear description of the issue of family stability during the pandemic and family counseling guidance as to the solution in improving family stability.

Method – This study applied a descriptive qualitative approach with an interview as the technique to collect the data. The informants in this study were 5 people consisting of the executive board and the members of Al-Uroh family community in Balikpapan.

Result - The result of the study shows that during the pandemic the issues influencing family stability are family financial crisis, boredom, and over anxiety. To improve family stability during the pandemic, family counseling guidance with a conjoint approach was carried out.

Implication – This research might become a study on the application of family counseling guidance services to improve family stability.

Originality – This study was about the effect of the covid-19 pandemic towards family stability and the role of family counseling guidance to improve family stability.

Keywords: Family counseling guidance, family stability, pandemic, covid-19.

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Abstrak

Purpose – Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk memberikan gambaran tentang masalah ketahanan keluarga di masa pandemi dan layanan bimbingan konseling keluarga sebagai solusi dalam meningkatkan ketahanan keluarga

Method – Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data wawancara. Informan dalam penelitian ini sebanyak 5 orang yakni dari pengurus dan anggota komunitas keluarga Al-Ushroh Balikpapan

Result - Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa permasalahan di masa pandemi yang berpengaruh terhadap ketahanan keluarga seperti krisis finansial pada keluarga, kejenuhan dan kecemasan yang berlebihan. Dalam rangka meningkatkan ketahanan keluarga di masa pandemi ini, upaya yang dilakukan yakni melalui layanan bimbingan konseling kelompok dengan pendekatan conjoint.

Implication – Penelitian ini dapat menjadi kajian tentang pemanfaatan layanan bimbingan konseling keluarga untuk meningkatkan ketahanan keluarga

Originality – Penelitian ini adalah penelitian tentang dampak pandemi covid-19 terhadap ketahanan keluarga dan peran bimbingan konseling keluarga untuk meningkatkan ketahanan keluarga

Keywords: Bimbingan Konseling Keluarga, Ketahanan Keluarga, Pandemi, Covid-19.

Introduction

In March 2020, Indonesia was shocked by the Covid-19 Pandemic which then widely affected the life of the people (Putri, 2020). Activities that could normally be performed previously started to be limited to hamper the massive spreading of the coronavirus. Such action of limiting the activities had negative effects both in material and individual moral aspects (Martoredjo, 2020). In terms of material, people were vulnerable to be in a difficult situation in terms of the economy since trading activities were closed during the early time of the pandemic. Morally, the people were vulnerable to the crisis condition psychologically due to anxiety, fears, and unpreparedness in facing such an emergency (Chairani, 2020).

Covid-19 pandemic provides a massive impact disregarding people's social status, married or single. Family is the smallest unit of a social unit consisting of a father as the breadwinner and a mother as well as children as the members of the family. Father as the breadwinner whose duty was to provide the family, during the pandemic their jobs are affected and it causes their daily/monthly income

decreased or even many of them lost their jobs since the place they were working or their businesses could not stand the pandemic (Fauziah & Afrizal, 2020). Such conditions could influence the financial condition of a family while their daily expenditure should still be fulfilled. This could be worsened by the vulnerability of the family members' health condition physically/psychologically due to the limited activities even to study at school. It could negatively affect the stability of a family during such difficult times (Winurini, 2020).

Family stability is the dynamics in a family that possesses the attitude of resilience, strong both physically and psychologically in reaching inner and outer welfare. In the concept of family stability, each family member plays a role to contribute based on the level of their development to gain family harmony and welfare (Nurbudiyani et al, 2021). The material and moral conditions affected by the pandemic could cause the resilient and strong attitude expected within the concept of family stability is not obtained and internally among the family members are vulnerable to internal conflict. Should the conflict not be handled correctly, the family would end in divorce.

The number of divorce cases in Indonesia during the pandemic increases up to 15.000 cases from only 5.000 cases before the pandemic (Awaliyah & Darmalaksana, 2021). From the data obtained from the Supreme Court, 65% of all divorce cases were based on the unwell economy aspect as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (Awaliyah & Darmalaksana, 2021). To prevent divorce cases from increasing, the role of stability in a family becomes significant to be obtained by each family.

In increasing the family stability, the approach used could be from the science studying about human's psychological aspects, one of which is counseling guidance. Counseling guidance as to the branch science of psychology which then is divided into parts, one of which is family counseling guidance. Family counseling guidance is a service of providing direction or assistance to family members through the kinship system to assist in solving a problem or to develop a family member's self-development (Atabik, 2015). Family counseling guidance becomes a model of intervention if there was a problem in a family or to prevent another problem to occur (Muawanah & Ningsih, 2013). In the context of family stability,

family counseling guidance service could be the booster to reach family harmony for each member to reach inner and outer welfare. Family counseling guidance service could be performed through two approaches, they are guidance for direction and the providence of a new horizon about family and counseling to help overcome the problems within the family (Muawanah & Ningsih, 2013). Both could be performed at the same time or separately, especially in this research, family counseling guidance service becomes one where it combines the process of guidance and counseling.

In some previous researches, the family counseling guidance service has been used as an intervention model to develop/improve family stability. The research performed by Lutfiana shows that family counseling guidance could lead the family to pass through a critical condition such as when they encountered disaster or to develop the potential of the family member (Lutfiah, 2020). Other research performed by Arifuddin explained that family counseling guidance might strengthen the relationship among family members where such a thing is a part of family stability (Muawanah & Ningsih, 2013). The difference between the research currently performed by the research and the research above was in the use of family counseling guidance service to improve family stability in a critical period during the covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the search result from google scholar, the research on family counseling guidance service and family stability had been done before the pandemic, and the current pandemic situation, there has not been much research performed. Therefore, the researcher saw the research gap in the difference between family stability and family counseling guidance service before and during the pandemic. The research would reveal the dynamics of family stability especially the family members of Al-Usroh Balikpapan family during the pandemic. Besides, the research would also reveal the form of family counseling guidance performed in a group to build family stability during the pandemic period and to overcome the problem in family stability especially for the family member of Al-Usroh Balikpapan. Based on the background mentioned, the formulation of the problem in this research is how the dynamics of the family stability in Al-Usroh's during the

pandemic period? And what form of family counseling guidance service to obtain excellent family stability during the pandemic period?

Research Method

This research applied qualitative type research and used descriptive method. This research would produce descriptive data describing the behavior of the subject currently observed. The presence of the researcher in this qualitative research played an important role in this research starting from planning, implementation to reporting the research result in the form of scientific article narration (Gulo, 2014). The subjects in this research are the executive board and the member of Al-Usroh Family Balikpapan who is planning and joining this activity. The reason for choosing the subject research was because they have become the initiator for other community groups, especially in Balikpapan city to increase family resilience/stability during the pandemic period.

Sampling was determined using purposive sampling based on the consideration of the representation of each division, both organizers and participants. Data collection techniques used in this research were interviews and observation to see how family counseling services were provided to increase family stability during the pandemic period. The data analysis technique in this research applied Bogdan and Biklen's qualitative data analysis by organizing the data, selecting, synthesizing, and finding the meaning and other important aspects within and concluding those data (Salim & Syahrums, 2012). The validity test in this research applied the triangulation method by comparing the interview result with the research subject and the research observation result as well as the input from counseling experts on family counseling and family stability.

Results and Discussion

The Problem in The Family Occurring During The Pandemic Period

The covid-19 pandemic that suddenly attacked gave a massive impact on the life of humans. The limitation set by the government to prevent the spread of the covid-19, on the other side, affected the aspect of human welfare materially and morally. The direct effect caused by the limitation due to covid-19 is financial crisis

perceived by people of middle to lower class, the boredom from limited activities as well as anxiety or fear of coronavirus infection.

The financial crisis that occurred during the pandemic was also perceived by family members of the community of Al-Usroh Family Balikpapan, one of whom was Mr. Suryanto. Financial Crisis that befall his family was caused by the decreasing salary as an employee of a company whose revenue was also decreasing. To anticipate such a condition, he and his family put more effort to maintain their expenditure and try to make both ends meet so that their daily needs could be fulfilled. The following is the statement from Mr. Suryanto on 12 July 2020:

“Well, thank god I could still work even though I have to accept the paycheck cut, but I am grateful that I could still work there since I know out there, there are many of our brothers had lost their jobs. To anticipate this, my wife and I try hard to make both ends meet so our daily needs could be fulfilled.”

Not only affecting the family financial condition, but the covid-19 pandemic also affected the psychological condition of family members who perceive the boredom from being restricted to performing outdoor activities. All family members could not perform routine activities that were normally performed outdoor such as working at the offices and studying at schools. Such a situation was perceived by Muhammad Ardan's who work from home and their children study from home too. Studying and working activities that are performed almost every day at home made them bored. They expressed that every day their interest in studying and working is decreasing since they are bored. The following is the statement by Mr. Muhammad Ardan on 12 July 2020:

"At the beginning of the pandemic, I was asked to work from home and so were our children. To start with it, I felt relaxed since it was a new experience when I work from home. As time went by, the pandemic did not show any positive progress. That was the time when I felt bored since I had to do my routine in the same condition."

Another psychological problem occurring during the pandemic was over anxiety. Anxiety is a form of psychological disorder signed by endless fear, worry, and nervousness. Anxiety could occur from trauma in the past or threats that could happen at any time. Anxiety that occurs during the pandemic regarding the fear of being infected by the coronavirus causes physical pain to the fear of being a dead victim of the coronavirus. Massive news coverage in both electronic and social media, as well as hoax issues spreading through those media, might influence one's psychological condition. Such anxiety condition was also perceived by Ms. Ananiah who is also nervous about being infected by the coronavirus. This anxiety was worsened by the experience of their relatives and friends around their working environment who had been stated positive covid-19 and some of them died from it. The following is an interview with Ms. Ananiah on 12 July 2020.

“To be honest, at the beginning of the pandemic I was anxious and worried if my family was safe from coronavirus since one of our relatives have once been declared positive covid-19 and my colleague at work died from it. Besides, social media and news from the internet covered news about covid every day and it caused me anxiety.

Approach and Method Used in Family Counseling Guidance

Issues on the aspect of material and moral that have previously been explained might provide a negative effect on the condition of a family member. The effect could start from the psychological disorder of a family member to the effect on the family stability. If the family stability started to break from internal/external problems, the potential to have relationship issues among family members become inevitable, or even worse it could lead to a divorce. Therefore, family stability during the pandemic becomes essential to obtain.

To obtain family stability during the pandemic period, the community of Al-Usroh Family Balikpapan initiate a family counseling guidance service for its executive board and members as well as for the public who are interested in joining the program. The family counseling guidance service they performed using group counseling guidance method. The use of such an approach according to the organizers was based on the interview with the researcher on 13 July 2020, since

the issue encountered by the group member was relative and they could share their thoughts to solve the problem they were facing. In addition, such family counseling guidance services were performed online through a gadget due to limited outdoor activities during the pandemic. Through family counseling guidance service, each family was expected to overcome the issue that frequently happen during the pandemic both in material and morally through approaches that are not against public norms and Islamic teaching. Such family counseling guidance service was expected to be able to strengthen the relationship among the family members, and strengthen the family stability during the pandemic and avoid divorce.

This service was facilitated by practitioners in the field of family counseling or what is commonly called a counselor. Counselor applied conjoint approach in family counseling guidance service. A conjoint approach is an approach in family counseling guidance focusing on the development of good communication among family members. A conjoint approach is an approach in family counseling guidance focusing on the building of good communication among family members. It is selected since the issue occurring within the family during the pandemic is closely related to the communication among family members that could be hampered due to uncertain psychological conditions during the pandemic period. According to the counselor in this activity, domestic conflict during the pandemic is a new thing that occurs, therefore, each family member must have a common vision so that family stability during the pandemic remains good. The following is an interview with the counselor on 13 July 2020.

"Problem in the scope of the family has frequently occurred, which then during the pandemic, the problems are getting complicated since our psychological condition was carried away by over anxiety due to this pandemic. Therefore, I demand everyone to overcome the problem start from good communications, and slowly the problems would be solved, and at the end of the day, our family would be fine."

From the result of observation and brief discussion between the organizers and the participants of the family counseling guidance program, in general, the final result of the problem occurring within the family could be solved well and the purpose of family stability is also obtained. This was revealed by one of the organizers. According to them, families who joined the program felt happy and on average the problem they have was solved well. As of some the families need to continue the program independently with the counselor. The following is an interview with the organizer of the program on 13 July 2020.

“Thank God, almost all families who joined this program felt happy since they could gain new knowledge as well as overcome their family problems during the pandemic. Of course, not all problems were solved since some of them need further treatment independently with a counselor.”

Discussion

Family stability is a form of dynamics in a family-accommodating both physical and non-physical ability to reach the level of welfare and tough family in any condition (Lestari, 2015). Family stability is essential to ensure that a family could live in harmony, be full of happiness, and manage to reach the goal set. Therefore, family stability becomes national agenda with Badan Kependudukan dan Keluarga Berencana National (BKKBN) (*Board of Citizenship and National Family Planning*) as the motor to reach that goal (Amalia, Ali Akbar, & Syariful, 2017).

The test for family stability emerged at the beginning of 2020 signing by the spread of the coronavirus in Indonesia. At that time, Indonesian people were in a total mess because activities dealing with the economy, services, face-to-face education were closed down and converted to online activities (Nasution, Erlina, & Muda, 2020). It was worsened by the increasing prices of daily needs and the tools to prevent virus infection such as hand sanitizer, face mask, etc. People who have already depended on a face-to-face-based economy have been financially affected causing financial crisis for the middle to lower class (Sugiri, 2020). Besides facing the crisis in terms of material, people also faced a moral crisis in the form of psychological disorders such as boredom and over anxiety.

The issues occurring during the pandemic affected the family stability that has been built. On the research carried out by Marina Falconier and Steve Schneider, it was explained that the covid-19 pandemic condition was the one that was responsible for the effect in terms of material and morally to the family stability in Scotland which then made some of them divorced (Falconier & Schneider, 2020). A similar condition was also perceived by families in Spain based on the research by Stevano, the number of the parish in the country decided to split with their partners because family pressure during the pandemic increased as much as 35% (Castro & Garcia, 2020). Psychological issues influencing the family stability were also perceived by an informant in this research, the group member of Al-Ushroh Family Balikpapan. They also perceived anxiety and fear during the pandemic, and what was different from the research above was that there were no family members of Al-Ushroh who decided to split with the partners during the difficult time of the pandemic. They were convinced to stick together through the pandemic and built good family stability in difficult times.

Family stability played a role as a fortress to protect families from a physical and non-physical thread that might lose its function and presence during the pandemic. For families that had problems during the pandemic, family stability becomes essential to be strengthened so that the family members could face the pandemic situation well and the potential to have divorce could be minimized (Musfiroh et al, 2020).

To assist the development/improvement of family stability during the pandemic, one of the approaches that could be applied was a psychological-based approach through family counseling guidance service. This service was then applied by the community of Al-Ushroh Family Balikpapan to help families in reaching the level of good family stability during the pandemic. The use of family counseling guidance service in improving family stability has been used in many opportunities, either before or during the pandemic. In David Rolls' research, it was explained that family counseling service is effective and it provides great benefit for married couples in England in their 1st-5th years of marriage to build good family stability (Roll, 2020). This program was carried out before the pandemic. As of during the pandemic, family counseling guidance has also become a method to

improve family stability which in this case was used by Japanese people based on the research result carried out by Shibusawa et al (Shibusawa et al, 2021). A similar condition was also perceived by the member Al-Usroh Family Balikpapan who perceived the effect of the pandemic on their family stability. Through family counseling guidance service, they could stand the pandemic and managed to build good family stability. It showed that the family counseling guidance service was able to reach family stability, both before and during the pandemic.

Conclusion

The covid-19 pandemic that occurred in early 2020 has affected Indonesian family welfare in terms of material or morally. In terms of material, the covid-19 pandemic affected the financial condition of the people for the limited activities of economy and service to prevent the massive infection of the coronavirus. Morally, the covid-19 pandemic affected the psychological condition of the people such as boredom because of the limited outdoor activity such as studying and working that had to be done online that caused anxiety and fear of their safety from the threat of being infected by the coronavirus. This affected the stability of each family. To improve family stability, Al-Usroh Family group Balikpapan conducted family counseling guidance performed by group counseling guidance method as well as by conjoint approach.

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