


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Children's positive feelings at school during post-pandemic COVID-19: An exploratory research with photo elicitation interview

 <https://doi.org/10.32505/inspira.v3i2.4991>

 Faiz Fatihul 'Alwan¹,  Tuti Azizah²,  Ridha Fauzia Rimuna³

¹ Department of Educational Psychology, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, West Java, Indonesia

² Department of Educational Psychology, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, West Java, Indonesia

³ Department of Educational Psychology, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, West Java, Indonesia

Corresponding Author:

Faiz Fatihul 'Alwan (email: faizfatihulalwan@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

Two years since the beginning of the pandemic, and now it is starting to subside, the face-to-face learning system has been applied as usual. Changes in the learning system, from online to face-to-face learning, change the atmosphere and conditions of the learning environment. Then, the conditions affected students' experiences and feelings during the learning process. This study uses a qualitative approach with photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) to explore the positive feelings of four elementary school students in Bandung. PEI explores the experiences of children who struggle to describe their situation explicitly. The interactive data analysis found that there was a change in the positive feelings experienced by students in the hybrid learning and back-to-school phases. Interaction with peers and the learning process with teachers are the two dominant things that trigger children's positive feelings about learning in the post-COVID era.

Article History:

Received 31 October 2022

Revised 21 December 2022

Accepted 27 December 2022

Keywords: elementary school students; photo elicitation interview; positive feeling; post-pandemic COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has lasted for about two years and has significantly impacted the education process. UNICEF (2021) explains that during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, prolonged school closures, social isolation from peers, and pressure to study at home with limited guidance significantly impact children's mental and emotional well-being, especially adolescents. This condition is essential in evaluating the various possibilities in children's behavior in the post-pandemic period, like today. Meanwhile, face-to-face learning in Indonesia has begun to be carried out in stages since the beginning of 2022. It has been carried out in full through regular face-to-face learning.

Changes in post-pandemic social conditions indeed challenge the educational process. The research results on elementary school-aged children in China revealed that after schools reopen, there are emotional and behavioral difficulties and significantly less prosocial behavior (Wang et al., 2021). Some reasons for this are changes in children's habits in learning, playing, and interacting with their peers. Research by Kourti et al. (2021) reported that children's outdoor play behavior was reduced

How to cite (APA 7th Edition)

'Alwan, F. F., Azizah, T., & Rimuna, R. F. (2022). Children's positive feelings at school during post-pandemic COVID-19: An exploratory research with photo elicitation interview. *INSPIRA: Indonesian Journal of Psychological Research*, 3(2), 71–78. <https://doi.org/10.32505/inspira.v3i2.4991>



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) Copyright ©2022 by Faiz Fatihul 'Alwan, Tuti Azizah & Ridha Fauzia Rimuna

during the pandemic; on the other hand, there was an increase in indoor playtime and video game screen time. Furthermore, according to the developmental theory stated by Santrock (2011), elementary school students become tired more quickly when they have to sit for a long time than if they are allowed to run, jump, and cycle, where these physical activities can refine their cognitive skills. In addition, stimulating activities that help them self-regulate, such as physical exercise and outdoor activities, can reduce anxiety and increase self-esteem and cognitive performance (Beute & de Kort, 2014).

If it is associated with social psychology theory, according to John Dewey, our behavior not only arises based on past experiences but also continuously changes or is changed by the environment, including other people. The various alternatives that develop from the two approaches then give rise to multiple perspectives in social psychology—a set of basic assumptions about essential things that can be considered as something that can be used to understand social behavior. There are four perspectives, namely: behavioral (behavioral perspectives), cognitive (cognitive perspectives), structural (structural perspectives), and interactionist (interactionist perspectives). In this regard, children's behavior in the new normal era after the COVID-19 pandemic has an impact on significant environmental changes, especially the school environment when face-to-face learning returns.

Elementary school children in Indonesia experience emotional and behavioral difficulties when returning to school. However, in Indonesia, little related research has been carried out, especially in the context of the behavior of elementary school children related to the learning process after the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous research on the education process in Indonesia has reported that students' behavior at the high school level after online learning is that they often come late to school but are willing to take part in learning well and are even enthusiastic about learning (Putri & Febriani, 2022). The learning behavior shown by these high school students shows positive behavior even though there are usually negative behaviors, such as being late as an adaptation in the post-pandemic period. Meanwhile, students' feelings are one of the determining factors in schooling because they are closely related to the teaching and learning processes (Schutz & Lanehart, 2002).

In this regard, research involving children as participants has several obstacles. Referring to Clark (1999), children have limitations in understanding explicit questions. Therefore, the data collection process using traditional interviews will have difficulty exploring what children think. For this reason, research involving children needs more effective interview methods, such as photo-elicitation interviews. Photo elicitation is an interview technique involving photos related to the experiences or perspectives of research participants. With photo-elicitation interviews, research involving children as research participants will be able to generate more comprehensive data (Collier, 1987). Unfortunately, very few studies use photo-elicitation interviews, especially in research on children during the post-pandemic COVID-19 period.

Therefore, this study aims to explore students' positive feelings about the direct learning process after the COVID-19 pandemic through photo-elicitation interviews. This research is fundamental because it can provide a primary picture for educators and institutions regarding the condition of children in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and map out things that need to be done to improve the quality of education according to children's development.

METHOD

This exploratory research uses a qualitative approach with photo-elicitation interviews. The qualitative approach in this study was chosen to explore and construct new knowledge in depth. In this regard, data was collected using a photo-elicitation interview technique followed by probing

questions. The photos used are documentation from the online learning period for hybrid learning taken by school teachers and photos of the face-to-face learning process taken naturally and deliberately by researchers at school.

The use of photo-elicitation interviews in this exploratory study was intended to explore the memories and experiences of elementary school students more profoundly. Children have limitations in understanding detailed questions (Clark, 1999; Walker & Clark, 1999), and traditional interviews will be challenging to explore the child's thinking. Therefore, using related pictures shown during the interview can be a means for students to access memory to get references or pictures of their experiences so that comprehensive data is obtained (Collier, 1987).

Photo elicitation interviewing, or PEI uses photos in a series of qualitative data collection interviews (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). The use of photographs in qualitative research has been discussed ethically and methodologically and refers to the success of a study's so-called "break the frame" method (Epstein et al., 2006). Photos can be used as icebreakers or lighters in deepening interviews, even more creatively with show-and-tell "games" (Tammivaara & Enright, 1986).

In this exploratory research, the researcher presented eight photos of students' learning processes, from online learning to hybrid learning, and took pictures of face-to-face learning arranged based on timelines. Photos 1-2 are online learning activities during the pandemic, photos 3-4 are limited and hybrid student learning activities (only half the class is studying in class), photos 5-6 are face-to-face learning activities for students during the post-pandemic COVID-19, and photos 7-8 are play activities and outdoor activities that students participated in during the post-pandemic COVID-19. The preparation of this timeline is intended to recall research participants' memories regarding the processes they have passed through over the past 2 years and provide an opportunity for them to explore their current experiences and feelings during face-to-face learning. The researcher presented the photos individually to each participant and asked them to describe what they saw to express their experiences and feelings.

For the selection of participants, this exploratory study used purposive sampling involving four elementary school students in Bandung. Respondents were chosen using the criteria of male and female students in grade 3 of elementary school. Grade 3 elementary school students in that particular academic year were chosen because they were starting face-to-face learning. Furthermore, in the age range of 8-9 years, children are more frequently with their friends, and their social life is wider, affecting their emotional development and behavior.

Additionally, this study uses interactive data analysis (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), where the data obtained will be read and interpreted repeatedly through the processes of "raw text," "relevant text," "repeating text," "repeating ideas," "themes," and "research concerns" to process existing research data until it is ready to be presented.

RESULT

During the post-COVID-19 pandemic, children go through a hybrid learning phase before undergoing face-to-face learning. Therefore, this discussion will discuss the experiences and dynamics of children's positive feelings based on the post-pandemic COVID-19 timeline.

Children's positive feelings during hybrid learning

Hybrid learning is not intended to provide a stimulus for student learning change. In *Surat Keputusan Bersama* of the Four Ministers concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Learning in the 2020/2021 Academic Year and the 2020/2021 Academic Year During the Coronavirus Disease

2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic (Keputusan Bersama Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan..., 2020), hybrid learning is expected to run effectively using three models: face-to-face learning, online-based learning, and also computer-based learning (Sumardiana et al., 2022). However, on the other hand, hybrid learning has also become a simulation period for children to undergo face-to-face learning. Children get the opportunity to adapt from online learning to face-to-face learning. This study then found a diversity of children's adaptation responses closely *related* to the learning process and social interaction when undergoing hybrid learning. One of them was Ehsan, who expressed joy during hybrid learning because she could meet her friends back at school.

"if the (hybrid-face-to-face) session is fun because you can meet friends, you can get acquainted (because we just met)."

(Interview with PEI, Ehsan, 27 September 2022)

Ehsan mentioned the experience of meeting friends who have never met before as what makes hybrid learning fun. This refers to social interactions that children can explore during face-to-face hybrid learning sessions. Elementary school children develop a great deal of socio-emotional self (Dewi et al., 2020). Elementary school-age children tend to like things that involve physical activity (Santrock, 2011), so the change from online learning to hybrid learning has become an adequate means for children. Although on the other hand, there are also children who feel that the limitations of hybrid learning are still uncomfortable. Like Nazih, who stated that hybrid learning with face-to-face sessions was fun, students still made Nazih less happy.

"Not happy, not happy. Only a few students are present in class. It is fun (meeting friends) but more fun online. It is not crowded if there are few students (during face-to-face sessions, hybrid). It is better at home (online), not many friends but studying for a while."

(Interview with PEI, Nazih, 27 September 2022)

From Nazih's statement, it is known that although social interaction has restored students' positive feelings when studying, the intensity of these feelings is subjective and cannot be the same for every child. In Nazih, he felt that too few friends attended the face-to-face hybrid learning session and were still too quiet, so his preference pointed to online learning, which has shorter study times. This shows that children tend to play, interact, and do physical activities that are more dominant (Paquette, 2004; Santrock, 2011), and this is closely related to children's positive feelings. Thus, online learning is still a preference for some children who want freedom. Although it is not more fun than meeting peers in the space dimension, shorter online learning gives positive feelings to some other children in the time dimension.

Children's positive feelings during face-to-face learning

After going through hybrid learning, the government appealed to every school with a confident readiness to carry out face-to-face learning through the Circular Letter of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 7 of 2022 (Surat Edaran Mendikbudristek No 7 Tahun 2022 tentang Diskresi Panduan Pembelajaran Tatap Muka, 2022). Elementary school-age children said they were happy with face-to-face learning, as expressed by Nazih, Ehsan, Icha, and Febli:

"Pleased (face-to-face learning) because of many friends."

(Interview with PEI, Nazih, 27 September 2022)

"I am happy (with face-to-face learning). Later, when I take a break, I can play. I can ask questions (talk) together, so it feels good to play with friends."

(Interview with PEI, Ehsan, 27 September 2022)

“I am glad I am not online anymore. I can meet the teacher.”

(Interview with PEI, Icha, 27 September 2022)

“Pretty happy (face-to-face learning).”

(Interview with PEI, Febli, 27 September 2022)

From Nazih, Ehsan, Icha, and Febli’s statements, this study found that children’s positive feelings were motivated by social interaction with peers during face-to-face learning. In addition, social interaction during face-to-face learning has stimulated children’s psychosocial and physical development (Suyadi, 2022). It is not surprising that Ehsan stated that face-to-face learning is far more enjoyable than even hybrid learning.

“(rather than hybrid learning). I prefer this (PTM) because everything is included, so that I can do that during the session. I know the half of it, so if everyone can get to know everyone.”

(Interview with PEI, Ehsan, 27 September 2022)

This again refers to the positive feeling children experience during face-to-face learning. Although indeed, it is not only social interaction that underlies these positive feelings but also the learning process itself.

“Happy (sports at school). sometimes we can play ball,”

(Interview with PEI, Nazih, 27 September 2022)

“So there is much knowledge I can convey to Mom when I learn this. Can mommy’s heart be happy later”

(Interview with PEI, Ehsan, 27 September 2022)

Nazih and Ehsan’s statement above shows that children’s positive feelings when learning face-to-face in the post-pandemic COVID-19 period are also related to the learning process. After the pandemic lasted so long, children did not have the opportunity to learn outside the classroom (Kourti et al., 2021). This study found that learning activities in the classroom make it easier for students to understand lessons, and activities outside the classroom, such as sports that involve much physical movement, are a factor in students’ positive feelings.

However, this study also found that, besides children’s positive feelings, there were incidents experienced by some children that made them demotivated.

“I do not like (face-to-face learning). In a row, I have cried because I was pushed. All girls are pushed by boys when we play *‘resep-resep jurang.’* I am frustrated. I am also sad after that I am lazy to study.”

(Interview with PEI, Icha, 27 September 2022)

“So, if someone is playing, I do not like it because I cannot concentrate; for example, I am still studying, and there are questions that are difficult for me to answer when I am finished, the boys scribble, so I have to delete them again, write them down again.”

(Interview with PEI, Febli, 27 September 2022)

Although it gives the impression that it is a commonplace among elementary school children, this, on the other hand, shows that not all children quickly adapt, even with positive feelings. Children who are used to online learning will feel they are missing some of the things they usually get while studying at home. Quiet and intimate learning environments are challenging for children to forget when they are exposed to online learning.

Positive feelings arise in children when interacting with peers, and the learning process that involves much physical activity will be able to stimulate children. According to Santrock (2011), elementary school children get tired of sitting for long periods. Elementary school children will be happier if they are allowed to run, jump, and cycle.

DISCUSSION

This study found that direct learning with teachers and friends at school elicited positive feelings in students. Children subjectively express happy feelings that align with their peers' learning experiences and social interactions. Learning experiences different from the pandemic situation make students experience the pleasure of learning associated with social interaction. The pandemic situation of limited interaction between students is now gone and has inspired students to explore themselves and their environment. However, because each child has different preferences, children's intensity and positive feelings cannot be generalized, especially during the transition period from online to face-to-face learning using hybrid learning. The following is a chart of the tendency of children's positive feelings in the post-COVID-19 pandemic:

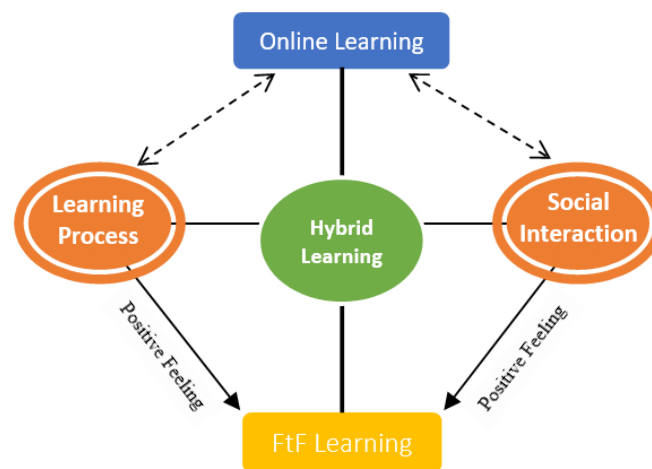


Figure 1. Children's positive feelings

Figure 1 shows how the change from online learning to hybrid learning has a nurturing effect on the learning process and social interaction with positive feelings. During face-to-face learning, children feel good about themselves because of how well they adjust to the learning process and interact with others.

CONCLUSION

Entering hybrid and face-to-face learning, the elementary school students in this study experienced positive feelings at school. A learning experience that differs from the pandemic, constructing joyful learning experiences associated with social interactions. Students feel happy because they can finally enjoy the classroom atmosphere, consult directly with the teacher, and work with peers. In addition, students also feel happy because they can intersperse study time by playing and joking with their

peers. Explicitly, students experience a developmental process of joyful learning after the pandemic has passed. The contribution of current study results toward education, especially for teachers and other educational practices, regarding joyful learning includes an emphasis on academic aspects and the atmosphere of learning and social interaction.

DECLARATION

Acknowledgment

The authors thank all parties involved in writing this article, especially SDN Sukawarna Bandung, for allowing us to conduct research with students at SDN Sukawarna.

Author contribution statement

Faiz Fatihul 'Alwan led the overall research design, conducted discussion processing, and wrote results and discussion. Tuti Azizah provided theoretical input, constructed and wrote background, and conducted discussion processing. Ridha Fauzia Rimuna designed interview instruments, conducted surveys and interviews, and designed results frameworks.

Funding statement

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data access statement

The data described in this article are openly available at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hJPFE_LyzNtCPEUyqIOjGTT2cgTEtHQc?usp=sharing.

Declaration of interest's statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

REFERENCES

- Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. New York University Press.
- Beute, F., & de Kort, Y. A. W. (2014). Natural resistance: Exposure to nature and self-regulation, mood, and physiology after ego-depletion. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 40*, 167–178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2014.06.004>
- Clark-Ibáñez, M. (2004). Framing the social world with photo-elicitation interviews. *American Behavioral Scientist, 47*(12), 1507–1527. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764204266236>
- Clark, C. D. (1999). The autodriver interview: A photographic viewfinder into children's experience. *Visual Sociology, 14*(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725869908583801>
- Collier, J. (1987). Visual anthropology's contribution to the field of anthropology. *Visual Anthropology, 1*(1), 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08949468.1987.9966459>
- Dewi, M. P., S, N., & Irdamurni, I. (2020). Perkembangan bahasa, emosi, dan sosial anak usia sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar, 7*(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.30659/pendas.7.1.1-11>

- Epstein, I., Stevens, B., McKeever, P., & Baruchel, S. (2006). Photo Elicitation Interview (PEI): Using Photos to Elicit Children's Perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(3), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500301>
- Keputusan Bersama Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Menteri Agama, Menteri Kesehatan, dan Menteri Dalam Negeri Republik Indonesia Nomor 03/KB/2020, Nomor 612 Tahun 2020, Nomor HK.01.08/Menkes/502/2020, Nomor 119/4536/SJ tentang Perubahan atas Keputusan Bersama Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Menteri Agama, Menteri Kesehatan, dan Menteri Dalam Negeri Nomor 01/KB/2020, Nomor 516 tahun 2020, Nomor HK.03.01/Menkes/363/2020, Nomor 440-882 tahun 2020 tentang Panduan Penyelenggaraan Pembelajaran pada Tahun Ajaran 2020/2021 dan Tahun Akademik 2020/2021 di Masa Pandemi Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (2020). <https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/files/download/5baf1873d5766d3>
- Kourti, A., Stavridou, A., Panagouli, E., Psaltopoulou, T., Tsolia, M., Sergentanis, T. N., & Tsitsika, A. (2021). Play behaviors in children during the COVID-19 pandemic: A review of the literature. *Children*, 8(8), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children8080706>
- Surat Edaran Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Nomor 7 Tahun 2022 tentang Diskresi Pelaksanaan Keputusan Bersama 4 (Empat) Menteri tentang Panduan Penyelenggaraan Pembelajaran di Masa Pandemi CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) (2022). <https://ldikti8.ristekdikti.go.id/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/SE-Mendikbudristek-No-7-Tahun-2022-ttg-Diskresi-Panduan-PTM.pdf>
- Paquette, D. (2004). Theorizing the father-child relationship: Mechanisms and developmental outcomes. *Human Development*, 47(4), 193–219. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000078723>
- Putri, F. Y., & Febriani, E. A. (2022). Perilaku belajar peserta didik pasca pembelajaran daring di SMAN 4 Pariaman. *Jurnal Sikola: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, 4(1), 55–67. <https://doi.org/10.24036/sikola.v4i1.199>
- Santrock, J. W. (2011). *Life-Span Development* (13th ed.). McGraw Hill.
- Schutz, P. A., & Lanehart, S. L. (2002). Introduction: Emotions in education. *Emotions in Education*, 2(37), 67–68. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410608628-1>
- Sumardiana, B., Fergina, S., Nurmala, S., Nanda, T. S., & Oktaviani, N. N. (2022). Penerapan hybrid learning system di era pandemi COVID-19 sebagai upaya untuk mewujudkan hak belajar anak berdasarkan Undang-Undang Sisdiknas di Desa Padasugih Brebes. *Jurnal Pengabdian Hukum Indonesia (Indonesian Journal of Legal Community Engagement) JPHI*, 5(1), 10–22. <https://doi.org/10.15294/jphi.v5i1.49910>
- Suyadi, S. (2022). Dampak pembelajaran daring pada perkembangan psikososial anak saat pandemi COVID-19. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(4), 3078–3090. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i4.2349>
- Tammivaara, J., & Enright, D. S. (1986). On eliciting information: Dialogues with child informants. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 17(4), 218–238. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1986.17.4.04x0616r>
- UNICEF. (2021, August 20). Menuju respons dan pemulihan COVID-19 yang berfokus pada anak. <https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/id/laporan/menuju-respons-dan-pemulihan-covid-19-yang-berfokus-pada-anak>
- Walker, R., & Clark, J. J. (1999). Heading off boundary problems: Clinical supervision as risk management. *Psychiatric Services*, 50(11), 1435–1439. <https://doi.org/10.1176/ps.50.11.1435>
- Wang, J., Wang, Y., Lin, H., Chen, X., Wang, H., Liang, H., Guo, X., & Fu, C. (2021). Mental Health Problems Among School-Aged Children After School Reopening: A Cross-Sectional Study During the COVID-19 Post-pandemic in East China. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12(November), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.773134>