

The Narrative Experiences of Mental Readiness Facing Educational Transition among Primary School Students

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Abstract

The transition that occurs in the field of education is common and can be experienced by each individual involved in the learning process. Transition shows that an individual has a good and smooth development process. As part of this adaptation, there are a few standard six students who have concerns about some issues such as bullying and anxiety. Ability to develop new relationship with peers help them to cope this transition. This study aims to explore their narrative of mental readiness to face the transition in education among primary students to secondary school. This study employed a qualitative research design with triangulating interview, discussion, and observation methods. There were four themes in this study, 1) to explore the role of the family on students, 2) to understand students' expectations of the transition process, 3) to recognize the level of students' knowledge about the types of secondary schools and finally, to investigate students' skills in building sentences and making simple sentences. The discussion made can make the respondents more prepared and have the goal of entering a school with high grades.

Introduction

Education is one of the crucial factors in the process of growth and development, for children. Education can be obtained in two ways, formal and informal education. According to Romadhoni et al (2019) formal education can be obtained by following a program or course that has been planned and structured by a registered department or institute as such both primary and secondary school while informal education can be obtained through daily life experience from various angles. This process also can be learned from others such as life skills through observations and sharing experience.

Generally formal education has a set level, starting at primary school students aged of seven to 12 years old. In addition, the education continues at secondary school age from 13

to 17 years old. This process is called transition or level transition, which means that everyone will go through a process that starts with kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and continues to higher education levels such as diploma, bachelor's degree and so on. However, entering a higher level is not an easy task as it requires an important level of physical and mental readiness. Student will meet new people and must adapt to unfamiliar environment and new surroundings, when moving to a new secondary school from different state. Furthermore, some students coming from different states have different dialects or accents in daily conversations that cause students to lack understanding of what is being said. This situation can be a cause of anxiety among themselves as language is paramount in the medium of interaction by each individual.

To ensure that students are always ready to enter a higher level, they really need dedicated support, especially from family members. Student who are not ready to step to the next level are likely to face several problems. According to Daulay (2021) students who have problems in studies, also problems in socializing, adapting to new environmental conditions and so on.

Statement of Problem

This study focuses on the mental readiness of sixth year students in facing the educational transition that will occur when they move to secondary school. The transition will challenge newly enrolled students (Besar et al., 2020). Among the challenges that often interfere with the mental readiness of students in the educational transition process is the issue of bullying. Concerns about bullying can be caused by past experiences. Graham Moore et al. (2021) in his study, concerns about the issue of bullying that often occurs in students who come from families with a low economic level.

This happens because students have a low level of confidence, always isolate themselves and often feel that they are not worthy to mix and be friends with other students. However, to see that a person is a victim of bullying, it can be seen in terms of his behavior and social development. Shafie et al (2017) have said that students who are often bullied will have a character that looks restless, physically weak, and unable to fight to defend themselves. Moore et al (2021) have said that the problem of bullying that occurs at school often occurs at the beginning of the school session. This statement has explained that the problem of bullying will decrease after the introduction process takes place.

Next, worry about losing existing friends. Relationships between friends play a key role in students' lives because friends are among the closest individuals to students after parents and family. In addition to parents and family, friends are also individuals who often provide moral support, especially when they are good and close friends. As Leah and Jaana (2022) said, friends have many roles such as a place to tell stories, a place to discuss and get help in conducting tasks given by the teacher and a place to share common interests such as drawing and coloring.

This anxiety can be worse when the student has an introverted personality. Based on a study conducted by Husin et al (2019), the personality of introverted individuals is shy, passive, quiet, difficult to initiate communication, think too much and act less. Adapting to a new place is also one of the concerns that exist in students. This happens because everything there is new, including the teaching staff, the environment and new study partners.

The factor of lack of achievement in terms of academics can also cause anxiety in students. This happens due to a sense of inferiority and the feeling that you are not worthy of being friends with other students, especially those who are smarter than them. There are

many factors that cause students to have less than satisfactory achievement, one of which is due to a lack of reading skills. According to Mahamod et al (2021), students who have problems in reading skills often happen among low-income student families. This happens due to the busyness of parents trying to earn a living to meet the needs of the family. Due to their busy lives, most parents from low-income groups do not have enough time to instruct their children and leave the matter of children's education to the school and teachers to educate comprehensively (Mahamod et al., 2021).

Research Objectives

Among the objectives of the study are

1. Explore the role of the family on student.
2. Understand students' expectations and hope for the transition of education to secondary school.
3. Recognize the level of students' knowledge about the types of schools secondary.
4. Investigate students' skills for high school in constructing sentences and making calculations.

Literature Review

Transition in education is the transition from one level to the next level of education. After completing their education in primary school, students will face a transition process that means students will move on to high school. Transition is an important process because it shows that the student's development is growing. Student will learn about the meaning of greater responsibility and can further develop their development and social skills. Donaldson et al (2022) have said that the transition of education offers important opportunities in terms of health and mental well-being which has the potential to improve the quality of life. Transition can also bring mixed feelings to students. As Moore et al (2021), the transition that occurs in the field of education can create feelings of excitement and anxiety in students and it varies according to socioeconomic status, emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Students who have high excitement often know about the advantages and opportunities they can find, especially when it comes to interacting and making friends new ones who may have similar interests. Furthermore, students who have high excitement are often associated with their extroverted personality. Students like this will often have no problem interacting and communicating to make new friends. Although however, students like this also have some sense of dread but most of them can adapt quickly.

However, the transition can cause anxiety in students. Constant and uncontrolled anxiety can cause students' mental readiness to enter secondary school to be at a minimal level. This anxiety can exist due to past experiences, especially those related to bullying issues, self-confidence, the need to socialize to make new friends and anxiety in losing existing friends.

Methodology

Setting and Population

The study was conducted at Seri Cheeding Religious Primary School, Banting District, State of Selangor. The population of the study were students (N = 56) at standard sixth. For participants selection all students were invited to involve in this study. They were invited to participate in based on several factors. They are sixth year students from Seri Cheeding Religious Primary School, voluntarily participate in the study, and verbal approval from their

parents. For participant selection process I employed purposive sampling technique as this method of choice for most of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009).

In the study, six participants agreed to participate in 5 sessions of group counseling conducted by me.

Research Design and Data Collection

This study is a qualitative study and the instruments used including guided interviews and non-direct observations through group counseling sessions. Group counseling was conducted as many as five face-to-face sessions. The selection of respondents was based on several criteria as following; sixth year students from Seri Cheeding Religious Primary School, voluntarily participate in the study, and verbal approval from their parents. A total of six respondents were selected, namely three boys and three girls who are coming from various backgrounds in terms of economics, social, behavior, academic performance, and personality. Data obtained through interviews and discussions were collected and recorded using device with password protected. All the discussions held in groups and the facilitator moderate the discussion and gathers all the students' answers, feedback and views on each content discussed. For this study the author is a facilitator. The facilitator also explained everything the students want to know so that their level of knowledge about the type of secondary school increases and they can make a choice about what type of school to enter during the transition process.

Data Analysis

For me as an author to get greater understanding about the experience and phenomena of educational transition among informants, it is the best suit for me to employ qualitative narrative research. This method helps me to examine and interpret the stories or narrative of students about educational transitions (Hassan, 2023).

This study employed a content analysis approach examining the content of a narrative to identify, themes, motifs and other patterns. For this study, the content of analysis based on text of verbatims of group sessions. There are five verbatims and video session to help me to analyze the narrative of the study. As the study emerged, themes of the study remained into four following themes: 1) role of the family on student. 2) students' expectations and hope. 3) students' knowledge about the types of schools secondary. 4) students' skills in constructing sentences and making calculations.

Unit of Analysis

Each participant is a unit of analysis of the study. In protecting participants' privacy and confidentiality, all participants' name were change to pseudonym.

Discussion and Findings**Result**

No.	Respondent	Gender	Number Siblings	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation
1	Participant 1	Male	Only child	Clerk	Nanny
2	Participant 2	Male	The second child of three siblings	Business	Housewife
3	Participant 3	Male	The second child of five siblings	Driver	Housewife
4	Participant 4	Female	The eldest of five siblings	Operator	Housewife
5	Participant 5	Female	The eldest of two brothers	Labor	Housewife
6	Participant 6	Female	The youngest of three siblings	Operator	Housewife

Source: Data Analysis

Theme 1: Role of Family on Students.

The theme based on the activities of the module called "Art Therapy". It aims to identify family members who are close to the respondent and always support and care about the respondent's education. Through this "Art Therapy" session, not only does the facilitator get to know close family members who always support the respondent in education matters, in addition the facilitator also be able to detect the reaction on the participant's facial face when they shared stories about close and not-so- close family members with them.

i) Subtheme 1: Family Intimacy**Significant family members with the respondent Pupils are more intimate to the mother.**

P3, P4, P5 and P6 said that they were closer to their mothers than their fathers. This was because their father works and has limited time to spend with them.

"I am close to my mother because she is always at home". -P3

"I am only close to my mother". -P4

"I am closest to my mother." -P5

"I am close to my mother only because my father is rather quiet". -P6

Students are close to both parents

There was a respondent who said that he was close to both his parents even though his father was busy working.

"I am close to my mother and father because I am an only child". -P1

Student are closer to siblings than mothers and fathers

Participant 2 said that he was closer to his 17-year-old brother than to his parents. When asked about his relationship with his parents, the participant just smiled, shook his head, and looked down.

"I am not very close to my parents. But I am closest to my brother". -P2

Based on the narrative and their stories, there were certain pattern among participants to lean their trust and future to whom their believe the most. Undeniably most of the participants more preferably to speak their conversations to their mothers as mother who are the most viable person in the household before the fathers. However, the dynamics of family structure may change their preferences as I can see there were participants also shared theirs with their siblings

ii) Subtheme 2: Family members who care about the participants' education

Mother cares more about education respondents

P2 and P6 said that the family member who cares about matters related to school, or their learning process is their mother.

"My mother. If I do not know later, my mother will help me". -P2

"If you study, my mother will too". -P6

Father is more Concerned about the Respondent's Studies

P4 and P5 stated, although they are closer to their mother in many things, but their father is a family member who always cares about their studies.

"Father who always asks and gives encouragement when it comes to studying". -P4

"Father sad if he wanted me to go to a boarding school". - P4

"My father. If I do not understand how to do schoolwork, then dad will teach me". -P5

Both Parents care about the Respondent's Education

According to P1 and P3, both of their parents are always concerned about matters related to their school even in busy situations, especially their father as the main breadwinner in family.

"If I don't know, he will teach me". -P1

"If I don't know, I ask him. Later he will explain and teach, show one by one like that". - P3

Siblings who care About the Respondent's Studies

According to P2, his brother is also one of the people who often teaches the participant if the participants has a problem in the lesson such as not understanding or not knowing about the requirements of the question.

"He explained then he showed one more math question after another". -P2

Theme 2: students' expectations and hope. The second theme aims to see to what extent the participants s can expect about the things that will happen when they go through the transition process. This objective is done through an activity called "Let's Think" which means participants must think about the positive and negative things that will happen when they enter the world of schooling which has a higher level. It is also intended so that participants do not have culture shock and know how to prevent negative things from happening to participants so that the learning process always runs smoothly.

i) Expectations of Positive Things

There are some positive things that the respondents are excited to experience and learn when going through the transition process in the next year. Among them is being excited to meet and socialize with new friends. A new atmosphere is also an option.

The participants because they want to know what they will feel when they go through the transition process and finally some participants are excited to gain new knowledge and learn about the rules in a new school, especially a boarding school.

Get new Friends and New Atmosphere

Based on the interviews made, all participants felt excited to make new friends when entering high school. Not only that, but they also feel excited because they cannot wait to be in a new atmosphere.

"I can't wait to meet new friends with a new atmosphere". -P1

"I want to make new friends and enter a new atmosphere because I'm in high school, right? Hehehe". -P2

"I can't wait to socialize with new people and a new atmosphere". -P3

"The first positive thing I wrote was meeting a new friend". - P4

"I can't wait to make new friends after that with a new environment when I sit in the hut later". - P5

"If it's positive, I write that I can't wait to meet and make new friends in a new environment". -P6

Learn New Rules and Gain New Knowledge

P5 stated that he was looking forward to knowing and learning about the new rules because the respondent had ambitions to enter a boarding school. P3 and P4 also said that they cannot wait to get new knowledge.

"I can't wait to learn new knowledge and learn new rules and disciplines". -P5

"I want to learn about knowledge and new things when I enter the 1st grade later". -P3

"Positive thing is learning new knowledge". - P4

ii) Anticipation of Negative Things

Anticipation of negative things during the transition process is something that participants worry about. This is so because they do not know what the atmosphere and process, they will go through soon. Among the negative things that the participants are worried about are being victims of bullying, it is difficult to make friends, afraid of choosing the wrong friends and being influenced by things that can affect their name and reputation, worrying if they cannot understand what the teacher teaches and making friends who toxic.

Worried about Being Bullied

All participants said the same thing that they were worried about being bullied by the senior students who were in the school they were going to attend.

"I'm afraid of being bullied". -P1

"I'm worried about being bullied by the top students". -P2

"I'm afraid of being bullied for fear of being angry with the older ones". -P3

"I'm afraid of being bullied". - P4

"Afraid of being bullied by students who are taller" -P5.

"I'm afraid of being bullied when I enter a new school". -P6

It is hard to Make New Friends

There are some participants who have concerns about how difficult it is to make new friends and worry if no one wants to be friends with them. This is so because there are respondents who have a quiet personality. Although however, not all participants have a quiet personality because other participants' personalities are easy-going.

"Can't find friends". -P1

"I'm afraid I have no friends". -P2

"I'm afraid people don't want to be friends with me". -P3

"Afraid no one wants to be friends". - P4

Wrong Choice in Making Friends

According to P2, P3 and P5, they have concerns about choosing the wrong friends that can cause them to be influenced by sad things or actions such as skipping school, being a rude student and defying the teacher, damaging property school and bully other students.

"Fear of having bad friends because of fear of being influenced, fear of being followed by another bad teaching, fear of being a student who likes to damage school property". -P2

"I'm afraid of getting bad friends for fear of not listening to the teacher". -P3

"Afraid of being a rude student". - P5

Worried about not being able to Understand what the Teacher is Teaching

P2, P4, P5 and P6 said that they were worried if they could not understand what the teacher was teaching. After having a discussion, they are worried if the teacher's teaching method is not suitable or too fast for them. participants are also hesitant to ask questions because they are afraid of being scolded and labeled as a weak student lesson.

"I'm afraid I don't understand what's being taught but can I ask?". -P2

"I'm afraid I won't be able to understand what the teacher is teaching because I'm afraid I won't be able to focus". -P4 "Afraid of not being able to understand what the teacher is teaching". - P5

"I'm afraid I don't understand the teacher because he teaches very fast". -P6

Get a Toxic Friend

P4, P5 and P6 are female respondents, and they have concerns about having toxic friends. When questioned, they have had the experience of being friends with toxic individuals and causing their friendships with other friends to suffer. This is so because the individual has made up stories about sad things or said things behind their back.

"Afraid of having a toxic friend, the front is good, and the back is cursing". -P4

"I'm afraid of having a toxic friend because I've had it before". - P5

"Afraid of getting a toxic friend because I've had one. I lost my friend because someone made up a story saying that I cursed my friend when I never did." -P6

Theme 3: Identifying the Level of Students' Knowledge of the Types of Secondary Schools

The third objective is based on the activity of the fourth module called "So Many School". It aims to explore the level of knowledge of the participants about the types of secondary schools available in Malaysia. This activity will provide knowledge about the types of secondary schools and subsequently be able to provide literacy to the participants in making choices. The participants can also plan the way of learning so that it becomes more effective and can get high results and can enter the desired school.

Knowledge of Missionary Schools

Participants' knowledge of missionary schools is quite limited because they think that schools are forbidden for Muslim students.

"Remind for the disbelievers". - P3

"Well, I thought the same thing, but apparently Muslims can also enter". -P2

Knowledge of Cluster Schools

Participants' knowledge about schools with cluster status is also quite limited. There are those knowing that cluster schools are for bright students. However, there are also participants who think that cluster schools are the same as missionary schools.

"The cluster school is like a school for smart boys". -P4

"If you want to get in, do you have to get a high result?". -P3

"Remind me of the same missionary school as before". -P5

"Let there really be a religious school with a boarding school?". -P2

Knowledge of Mara Junior Science College (MRSM)

Most participants know that MRSM is a boarding school and that it is a science stream. Participants were also known that to enter MRSM, they need to master all subjects and get excellent results. R4 stated that he was extremely interested in entering MRSM, but the participants had problems in mathematics subjects.

"Because the school is for smart boys, then it's a dormitory". -P4

"But math is hard bro". - P4

"How to get a high score in mathematics?". - P4

Knowledge of Art Schools

Through observation and interview, R3 showed that he was quite interested in art school because the respondent had a deep interest in the field of painting. However, his parents were reluctant to allow him to enter an art-oriented school.

"It's art school, Sis Diy". - P3

"I am interested in art again when I paint. But my parents don't like it." -P3

"My mom and dad said no, that's just the way it is". - P3

Knowledge of Religious Secondary Schools

From the beginning of the session, P5 mentioned about religious type secondary schools. Although it was his father's wish, the respondent happily and openly accepted his father's suggestion, especially when the respondent knew that the school had a dormitory.

"If it's my father, he wants me to go to a religious school like a boarding school. So, I must go to a religious school, right?". -P5

"If that's the case, I'll tell my father that there's a religious type in high school because I want someone who has SPM too". -P5

Knowledge of National Secondary Schools

P1, P2 and even P5 show interest in the national secondary school which is known to many as a normal day secondary school. P2 said that his brother attended a national secondary school and P5 said that his mother preferred the participants to enter a national secondary school.

"My brother is in a normal high school." -P2

"Is normal high school, okay?". -P1

"It's a national secondary school, Kak Diy, because my mother chose a normal secondary school". - P5

Knowledge of Sports Schools

P2, P5 and P6 show a deep interest in school sports. According to both participants, they really enjoy playing sports because it is fun. Both participants kept asking about sports schools even when out of session.

"! I like to play football". -P2

"If it's sports school, do you study like normal?". -P2

"What sports are there at the school?". - P5

"! I like to play netball." -P6

Knowledge of Full Boarding Schools (SBP)

Some participants have an interest in knowing about boarding schools. participants have confusion whether it is like other boarding schools or not.

"This one. I want to know if the dormitory is full". -RP3

"It's the dormitory, if you go back, when can you go back?". -P2

"Can I bring my mobile phone?". - P4

"Ow. Just like any other boarding school. How to study is the same?". - P3

Theme 4: Exploring students' skills to go to high school build sentences and make calculations.

The theme is to identify students' competence and ability to build sentences and do mathematical exercises. This is so that the facilitator can know whether the respondent is weak in the exercises or not. Participants who are a little weak in doing the exercise will be taught by the facilitator in an effortless way so that the respondent is able to complete the exercise. Participants who have weaknesses are advised to do more practice so that they can get excellent results in the upcoming UPSR examination. With excellent results, respondents can choose any secondary school they want to enter for the transition process to enter the first level. However, the Participants had no problem in making sentences. The sentences made are also in accordance with UPSR standards.

Participants who are less interested in mathematics subjects because they consider them difficult.

"Aaaah. Not interested in mathematics". -P4

"How difficult it is to be happy". - P4

"How do you calculate the multiplication?". - P3

"Sister Diy, how do you calculate the cipher? The easiest way. It is hard for me to remember cipher". - P3

Participants who are interested in mathematics subjects.

"Where is it difficult? You do this. That is like the teacher that day". -P6

"Yeah! Ready as soon as possible". -P2

"It's ready. It's a good question." -P1

Discussion

The results of the study show that not all participants get full support from both parents about their studies. There are participants who only get support from one of their two parents and those who do not get support from both but are still supported by older siblings. Support from the family, especially from the parents, is especially important because it can influence the children's enthusiasm in terms of studies. As Fadzia, et al (2021) said, parental support has a major influence and can encourage children to be more enthusiastic in their studies. The spirit that is in the children will make them more enthusiastic to gain knowledge and then get good achievements. Likewise with Elisa, et al (2023), they have said that education and parental support is especially important because it affects the process of shaping children's development and further affects children's involvement with academics. A good achievement will give children the freedom to choose the type of school they want for the next level, which is entering the realm of secondary school.

Next is the student's expectations while going through the transition process. The transition from primary school to secondary school can have a positive or negative impact on students depending on how they behave. According to the results of the study, most respondents said that they are worried about being bullied and will not make new friends. Concerns about the issue of bullying often occur especially for students with junior degrees because they are worried about being bullied especially when they enter a boarding school. There are many factors that make a person a bully, among them the influence of family, peers, and the environment (Yung et al., 2019). According to Yung et al (2019), bullies usually have a large and strong physique while victims of bullying are students with a quiet personality.

The effects of bullying on the victim's mental health can influence students not to go to school. Even worse, the victim is likely to be involved in skipping school due to fear of being bullied (Shafie et al. 2017). However, bullying cases need to be dealt with so that no more students become victims. Between The strategy that can be made is to implement the homeroom program, which is a program that can improve a person's identity and can educate students to become a more responsible human being (Yung et al., 2019). Difficulty in making new friends is also one of the respondents' concerns. Friends are thing which is important for students because friends are the most understanding individuals (Moore et al., 2021) and close to the students, especially for those who attend boarding schools.

The level of students' knowledge about secondary school should be given attention so that students are motivated by the type of school that has good grades. Pupils will set high targets and will strive to achieve of what they have dreamed. As said by Ishak et al (2020), motivated students the high will push themselves to reach an important level and have the determination to gain knowledge without fail. Not only that, students who are motivated to get what they dream of will also have a strong drive to continue to be interested in the lessons they learn (Zaliza, et al., 2014). Even though there are subjects that are less liked, students will still try to master those subjects so that the exam results that will be obtained will not decrease due to the less liked subjects.

Students' skills in constructing sentences and making mathematical calculations also need to be taken care of. This is because schools with high grades or performance place significant importance about Malay, English, and mathematics. Although however, not many students are interested in mathematics because for them it is quite difficult and there are too many calculations that need to be memorized. However, there are still many students who still rely solely on the teacher. Students tend to wait for the teacher to give exercises and explain each concept one by one without trying or doing other exercises first. The role as a

teacher is only to provide a suitable learning environment and explain the concepts contained in mathematics subjects and the rest of the students need to have their own initiative such as doing exercises, making group discussions, and meeting the teacher personally if they still cannot understand (Rizal et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Overall, the five group counseling sessions conducted have made the respondents more prepared to face the transition process that will happen soon. Their expectations of what happened were either positive or negative has made the respondents more enthusiastic to face the transition process. Respondents also gain knowledge about several types of secondary schools and can make targets about the type of school they want to attend. Therefore, the respondents' motivation will be greater, and they will work hard so that they can achieve what they dream of. Finally, subjects that are poorly understood and preferred will also be studied so that they can enter a school with high grades or performance as they have dreamed of.

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