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Public elementary schools' handling of student neglect and adjustment problems

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The challenge of being able to respond to student adjustment needs in elementary schools is a problem worldwide. In this manuscript, we offer one example from Indonesia. Using data from 15 public elementary schools from three small regions in Indonesia: Semarang, Surabaya, and Jakarta, we analyze conditions that result in neglect. Student neglect is any inappropriate action by an incompetent person that results in serious physical or emotional harm, or abuse, which presents a serious risk of harm to the student. The data were collected through documentation, interview, and observation. The study results showed no specific handling adjustment problems regulations and mechanisms, specialized professional staff handling adjustment, and specific room for handling adjustment problems within the public elementary school due to the unawareness, misunderstanding, ignorance, the less-caring educational system, and also the disconnection of the relationship between the educational institution and the community. The study suggests that student neglect on adjustment problems at public elementary schools should not be taken lightly because this can threaten the psychological condition of students in the future.

KEYWORDS

adjustment, educational system, elementary schools, Indonesia, student neglect

1. Introduction

Many studies investigated the issues that can hinder learning performance of the elementary students who are in the early and most important phase of their development (Diep, 2022; Maulyda, 2022; Naqiyah et al., 2022; Wabiser et al., 2022). One of these issues is student's adjustment. The problem of students' adjustment in public elementary schools tends to be neglected because there is no serious attention from the school. The case of elementary schools in Indonesia is also a challenge to answer the adjustment needs of students in elementary schools, which are a world problem. Ivanoff and Hottel (2013) revealed that child neglect is a serious reality in American society, whereas most dental schools do not provide sufficient training in dealing with problems. Pirdehghan et al. (2015) reported that cases of student neglect in Iran tended to be high at intervals of 83.8–93.5%, all related to student adjustment problems. According to a report by Straits Times, Singapore, many students, ranging from 6 to 18 years old, suffered from adjustment issues (stress, anxiety, and depression disorder) in their schools (Kompas.com, April 20th, 2019). Similarly, a survey also reported that psychological problems befall many elementary school students as follow as stress (23.90%), anxiety complaints (18.90%), mood swings (9.10%), anxiety disorder (8.80%), and somatic complaints (4.70%) (Lifestyle-Bisnis.com, October 14th, 2020). Bland et al. (2018) emphasized that the impact of student neglect is serious and negative; however, it is not well understood by education providers. Schools all over the world lacked mechanisms and staff to address student adjustment.

In general, the studies on the neglect of the students' adjustment tend to view three aspects, namely: (1) adjustment as a form of common social adaptation process (Susanti, 2018; Qamaria and Astuti, 2020); (2) adjustment as light and convincing case without any need for serious treatment (Coşkun and Kara, 2020; Xiang et al., 2020; Gubbels et al., 2021); and (3) adjustment as an emphasis from the adult perspective (Magelinskaitė-Legkauskienė et al., 2017; Dalen et al., 2020; Riley and Johnson, 2020). From the above tendency, no single study views adjustment as a serious problem. Unfortunately, the case of students' adjustment cannot be taken lightly; therefore, the professional staff should handle this case seriously. In line with this statement, Bland et al. (2018) assert that the students' neglect of their adjustment case can disturb their life in the future.

The current study researchers would like to cover the gap with the previous studies and view the elementary school students' neglect of the adjustment as a light, reasonable, and common issue. Thus, the study aims at firstly mapping student neglect toward the student adjustment within the public elementary schools based on the school policy, the school competency, and the adjustment case that has been neglected. Secondly, analyze the factors influencing student neglect within the public elementary school over the adjustment case.

Student neglect on adjustment within the public elementary school highlights an issue in the relationship between the school and the student. The adjustment misperception between the school and the student results in a less comprehensive academic policy. The issue of student adjustment is only viewed as a practical problem that every growing child has been experiencing. In line with the statement, classroom teachers consider student adjustment to be sufficiently handled; however, sometimes, they need to gain the specific skills to handle it. The issue of students' adjustment cannot be taken as a trigger to the academic issue that might disturb the learning process and eventually break down the students' learning achievement. On another occasion, students' neglect can also occur due to the top-down approach adopted within the government regulation, leading to the neglect of society's suggestions and aspirations. Consequently, solving students' adjustment issues requires the school's willingness in the form of awareness, capacity, and concern, the availability of professional, competent, and qualified staff, and the specific room for handling the students' adjustment.

2. Literature review

2.1. Student neglect

Student neglect is a relatively new concept in education (Rudland et al., 2021). Student neglect is any inappropriate action by an incompetent person that results in serious physical or emotional harm or abuse that presents a serious risk of harm to a student (Bland et al., 2018). Student neglect also fails to meet a child's emotional needs, including showing love or responding to a child's emotions (Brennan et al., 2021). Student neglect can be seen as a form of mistreatment of students. Student neglect occurs when incompetent people handle non-academic student cases, resulting in non-optimal resolution. In other words, student neglect appears as a form of teacher conduct in schools that results in serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, and a serious risk of harm (Schomburg, 2020). Berliana et al. (2019) emphasized that student neglect is a form of child abuse by not fulfilling or ignoring their basic needs. In turn, such student neglect

will decrease the quality of the learning experience and scrape the educational mission (Buery-Joyner et al., 2019).

Several studies reported that student neglect is a form of abuse and abandonment (Ivanoff and Hottel, 2013; Pirdehghan et al., 2015; Altan et al., 2020). Almost one in five children suffered from physical and emotional neglect, leading to depression (Finkelhor et al., 2013). Student neglect can be divided into active (intentional) and passive (unintentional) neglect. The former happens when the teacher's behavior directly decreases the students' learning, whereas the latter occurs when the teacher's behavior indirectly lowers the students' learning (Buery-Joyner et al., 2019). Student neglect makes students irresponsive and inconsistent, which causes them not to recognize themselves. Moreover, the students will fail in social adaptation (Rudland et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the students impacted by such neglect have lower emotional intelligence than those who suffer from psychological abuse (Mattar, 2018). According to Goleman, children who experienced or suffered from neglect have less capacity to learn social or emotional competence since childhood; consequently, their capacity to regulate emotions, solve problems, and perform adaptations is hugely impacted (Mattar, 2018).

2.2. Elementary schools

Elementary school is one of the most important parts of the educational system (Xiao and Huang, 2011). The elementary school consists of different classroom levels (Wahyulestari, 2018). Spending years in an elementary school prepares children for subsequent learning experiences. Thus, the assessment and the student's life experience in elementary school can influence their future educational expectations, engagement level, and school achievement (Liu et al., 2015). The elementary school learning process encompasses multiple lessons with simple teaching-learning activities (Indriani, 2014; Meng and Muñoz, 2016), and elementary school teachers generally provide the intervention service for the students (Tangdhanakanond et al., 2013). Despite that, elementary school teachers play an important role in the learning process by laying the foundation for student competence (Chen, 2017).

In Indonesia, there are Elementary Schools and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Elementary schools have a general orientation organized by the ministry of education, culture, research, and technology. In contrast, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah has a religious orientation organized by the ministry of religion. The state fully funds both, and the community funds some. However, the implementation system and curriculum must follow the National education system law (UU SPN) (Ihsan et al., 2021). Public primary school means a system of administration and financing entirely by the state. All policies in public elementary schools are regulated by the ministry of education and culture in Jakarta. Related to this, the community views public elementary schools as having higher quality than private schools. At least the learning facilities in elementary schools under government support are good. In addition, the majority of public elementary school teachers are state teachers. It has been proven that people's interest in sending their children to public elementary schools has increased.

Elementary school is the first official educational level to develop students' potential (Wuryandani et al., 2014). Therefore, elementary school is important in forming well-qualified individuals (Hanief and Sugito, 2015). The formation of the elementary school students' character is a pedagogical process that has been specifically organized in the development of empathy and the capacity to establish interaction with

the surrounding worlds based on the principles of inter-individual conflict-free relationships (Mokeyeva et al., 2015). In addition, elementary school students enter society for the very first time, staying away from the protection of their families (Byun and Ha, 2017). Thus, elementary school is an environment that directly encounters the students and can potentially educate the students' paradigms, minds, and behavior. Therefore, every academic unit, specifically elementary school, is expected to have commitment and integrity toward the character development of the national generation. One of the ways to achieve this end is by implementing character education that has been integrated into the governing educational process (Darmayanti and Wibowo, 2014).

2.3. Students' adjustment problems

Term adjustment is often interpreted as adopting individual behavior according to the environment. The adjustment process means an individual way of dealing with stress, pressure, and conflict to meet needs. There are two determinants of success in adjustment: the individual and the environment. Individuals present several factors, including heredity, biology, psychology, and the quality of their socialization. At the same time, the environment presents all existing social factors. In line with this concept, student adjustment is an effort by students to adapt to the environment, which involves five aspects, namely (1) academic performance, (2) school regulations, (3) respect for teachers, (4) being positive at school, and (5) actively participating in learning and habituation activities at school (Musitu-Ferrer et al., 2019). Muassomah et al. (2022) said student adjustment problems are closely related to school conditions and teacher figures. The complexity of aspects in the school environment is a source of triggering student adjustment problems. Sutherland et al. (2018) revealed that students who have psychological limitations and low socialization quality have the potential to experience adjustment problems.

The majority of students almost experienced adjustment problems in elementary schools. This is in line with the expression that the complexities bind students within themselves and the social complexities outside themselves in the adjustment process. In line with that, the problem of student adjustment at school initially stems from internal factors and then from external factors. Walker and Graham (2019) reported that the characteristics and attitudes of students toward schools and the climate in schools strongly influence teacher-student relationships and student adjustment. Musitu-Ferrer et al. (2019) strengthened student adjustment problems are closely related to the empathic quality of the school environment. The close relationship between the empathic quality and school environment shows the importance of creating an empathetic environment so that elementary school students do not experience serious adjustment problems. Zhang et al. (2019) emphasized that a stressful life can affect the quality of school adjustment.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Focus

To date, student neglect in students' adjustment problems has occurred in education—public elementary schools in Indonesia lack mechanisms and professional staff to deal with student adjustments. We hypothesized that case-handling activities for student neglect would have dedicated staff aware of processes and procedures for responding

to student neglect. This is urgent, considering that neglected students are endemic in all public elementary schools requiring significant attention. Therefore, this article focuses on students' neglect of adjustment problems in public elementary schools, which have not been evaluated for so long.

3.2. Type

The qualitative study investigated student neglect on student adjustment problems in public elementary schools. The primary data were interviews and observation. Meanwhile, the secondary data were in the form of documents. The interview was carried out in the following ways and stages. First, five public elementary schools were determined in three research target cities: Semarang, Jakarta, and Surabaya. Second, school principals, class teachers, religious teachers, and student guardians were pleased to be interviewed regarding the required research data. Third, make an appointment to interview and write transcripts as raw data. Fifth, check the validity of the data by triangulating other sources of informants. Observations were made by observing the handling of students who experienced adjustment problems at school. Documentation is a form of systematic activity or process of searching, using, hiding, compiling, and providing a document for obtaining knowledge, information, and evidence related to student neglect in public elementary schools. The stages included presenting information and official and accurate evidence useful for archives. Second, to record and categorize information in the form of writing, photos, and videos related to forms of student neglect at school. Third, present it as data that explains various things related to student neglect at school.

3.3. Participants

The study participants were public elementary school principals, class teachers, parents or guardians, and religious teachers in Semarang, Central Java, Jakarta, and Surabaya, East Java province. In total, 15 public elementary School Principals, 15 class teachers, 15 parents or guardians, and 15 religious teachers in the three cities were selected for the study. The selection of the three cities was based on reasons. First, Jakarta and Surabaya are the two larger cities in Indonesia, where the dynamics of life are quite high, in line with their nickname as metropolitan cities. Second, Semarang has recently been known as a cosmopolitan city characterized by high social dynamics. Third, children in communities in the three cities are quite vulnerable to psychological disorders. Then, school principals, class teachers, parents or guardians, and religious teachers were chosen as the participants because of their direct involvement in forming students' attitudes and behavior. These participants were chosen as the primary data source from the public elementary schools in Semarang, Jakarta, and Surabaya. They have witnessed the ongoing practice of neglect among public elementary school students.

3.4. Procedures

The researchers obtained permission to conduct the study from the principals of 15 participating public elementary schools, class teachers, religious teachers, and parents or guardians. Each researcher collected

data from five school principals, five class teachers, and five parents and guardians of students in Semarang, Jakarta, and Surabaya. Before this, all participants were assured that participant responses would be treated confidentially and anonymously and that research data would be stored securely. Once the participants' consent forms were received, an appointment was scheduled with the school principal, class teacher, religious teachers, and parents or guardians of students. The researcher attended the school according to the agreed days and hours. Coincidentally, from the five schools participating in the research, the participants, which included: school principals, class teachers, religious teachers, and parents/guardians of students, were able to attend simultaneously on the agreed day. The school principal, class teacher, and religious teachers were given the seven questions (Table 1), and parents or guardians of students were given the seven questions (Table 2). The researchers questioned the participants one by one. We recorded all answers while ensuring that their names and answers would not be shared with anyone else and that they could withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

3.5. Data analysis

The collected data were then analyzed using descriptive qualitative. Qualitative data analysis was carried out through the following steps: data reduction, data presentation, data verification, and conclusion. Data reduction of interview transcripts was coded based on the need to reveal how student neglect occurred and why it happened. Data presentation used restatement, description, and interpretation based on interview excerpts. Data validation was carried out to ensure the truth of the unavailability of professional staff and mechanisms to deal with

student adjustment problems and adjustment problems that need to be optimally resolved. Finally, the triangulation of all collected data involving a variety of sources and methods was to ensure that student neglect in public elementary schools is real.

4. Results

4.1. Student neglect in school policy concerning student adjustment

The interview showed two types of student neglect concerning student adjustment. First, all public elementary schools in Indonesia do not have specific regulations that can serve as a reference for the academic community in handling non-academic cases, especially the adjustment ones. The interview with the elementary school principals, classroom teachers, and religious teachers showed a need for more specific regulations from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the school principals themselves to define handling the students' adjustment problems (Table 3). Second, all public elementary schools in Indonesia need specific mechanisms for handling student adjustment. The participants stated that such mechanisms were derived from the school regulations, whereas the absence of particular regulations led to the need for clearer steps in adjustment case handling. In other words, public elementary schools in Indonesia needed to have specific policies for handling adjustment cases. Table 4 provides detailed results.

Student neglect in school policy showed that regulations and the steps for handling the adjustment cases did not receive serious attention, as reflected by one of the participants:

TABLE 1 The interview questions the participating teachers and principals.

| Item | Questions statement |
|------|---|
| 1. | Are there no special staff in public elementary schools to deal with student adjustment problems? |
| 2. | Do public elementary schools have no mechanism to deal with student adjustment problems? |
| 3. | Is there no special room in public elementary schools to deal with student adjustment problems? |
| 4. | Who is in charge of dealing with student adjustment problems? |
| 5. | Can class teachers' handling of student adjustment problems be optimal? |
| 6. | What student adjustment problems often occur in schools? |
| 7. | Which student adjustment problems are often not handled thoroughly but are considered complete? |
| 8. | Is there a need for especially competent staff to handle student adjustment problems? |
| 9. | Why does not the government appoint competent staff to deal with student adjustment problems? |

TABLE 2 The interview questions the participating parents or guardian students.

| Item | Questions statement |
|------|--|
| 1. | As a student's guardian, are you sure your child is not prone to be involved in bullying, violence, fighting, and sexual harassment? |
| 2. | As guardians of students, did you know that schools are prone to fights between students, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence? |
| 3. | Are you sure that the school can handle it optimally? |
| 4. | Can cases like those in question number 1 be handled properly by schools without the presence of a counseling teacher? |
| 5. | Are you sure that only guidance and counseling teachers can handle student adjustment problems? |
| 6. | As a student guardian, is the problem of student adjustment a mild or serious problem? Why? |
| 7. | If so, is the need for guidance and counseling teachers in elementary schools an emergency or just normal? |

TABLE 3 Type of students who have the adjustment problems.

| No | Grade | Age | Sex | Misbehavior | Meaning |
|----|---------|-------|-------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | 5 & 6 | 11–12 | Male/Female | Children like to disturb and want to be noticed | like to harass friends |
| 2 | 5 & 6 | 11–12 | Male | Child behaving aggressively | hard to hold back |
| 3 | 5 | 11 | Male/Female | Children steal, because of economic factors | Disadvantage student |
| 4 | 4 | 10 | Male | Often breaks glass, lamps | Careless child, not conscientious |
| 5 | 3 | 9 | Female | Child innocent | victim of mockery |
| 6 | 4 | 10 | Male/Female | Slow learner | Intellectual problem |
| 7 | 3, 4, 5 | 9–11 | Male | Stubborn child | Hard to learn |
| 8 | 4 | 10 | Female | Kleptomaniac child | Shunned by classmates |
| 9 | 3 | 9 | Male | Children with very high curiosity | Hard to control myself |
| 10 | 6 | 12 | Male/Female | Children with conduct disorder | Anti-mainstream behavior |

TABLE 4 Student neglect in school policy.

| No. | Name of public elementary school | Regulations for the adjustment case handling | Handling step |
|-----|--|--|---------------|
| 1. | Karangayu Public Elementary School Semarang | None | None |
| 2. | Bangetayu Public Elementary School Semarang | None | None |
| 3. | Krapyak Public Elementary School Semarang | None | None |
| 4. | Lemponsari Public Elementary School Semarang | None | None |
| 5. | Mangkang Public Elementary School Semarang | None | None |
| 6. | Kapasari 1,292 Public Elementary School Surabaya | None | None |
| 7. | Jepara I90 Public Elementary School Surabaya | None | None |
| 8. | Kaliasin I280 Public Elementary School Surabaya | None | None |
| 9. | Dr. Sutomo I Public Elementary School Surabaya | None | None |
| 10. | Babatan I Public Elementary School Surabaya | None | None |
| 11. | Cempaka Baru 03 Public Elementary School Jakarta | None | None |
| 12. | Cempaka Baru 01 Public Elementary School Jakarta | None | None |
| 13. | Cempaka Baru 05 Public Elementary School Jakarta | None | None |
| 14. | Cempaka Baru 07 Public Elementary School Jakarta | None | None |
| 15. | Cempaka Baru 11 Public Elementary School Jakarta | None | None |

Source: The researchers' compilation, 2022.

“... Ever since a long time ago, the public elementary school does not have any specific regulations and mechanisms for handling the cases of student adjustment” (Interview, 2022).

Another participant added:

“... All public elementary schools, and even the Ministry of Education and Culture, do not devise or formulate the regulations that specifically handle the cases of the student adjustment. The lack of such regulations has resulted in the absence of steps for handling adjustment cases (Interview, 2022).

The interviews showed no specific regulations and steps to handle the adjustment cases in public elementary schools. Thus, handling student adjustment in public elementary schools has been conducted without clear regulations and mechanisms. Furthermore, another participant who was a public elementary school principal confirmed the lack of school regulations to handle student adjustment as follows:

“... There have not been any regulations by the Ministry of Education and Culture that show how to handle student adjustment.

Therefore, as school principals, we do not dare to devise or formulate the regulations and even the mechanism for handling the adjustment” (Interview, 2022).

The above response asserted the reality of the public elementary schools in Indonesia regarding the adjustment case handling. Indeed, numerous cases of student adjustment have been found, but there have yet to be any formal regulations, mechanisms, or steps for handling these cases. Hence, it can be defined that student neglect in student adjustment originated from the schools' absence of formal regulations and adjustment case-handling steps.

4.2. Student neglect in school competence concerning student adjustment

The interviews showed that the absence of school competence marks student neglect in adjustment, covering two facts. First, interviews

revealed that the public elementary schools in Indonesia do not have professional staff (Guidance and Counseling Teachers) to deal with student adjustment, as stated by one of the participants, who was a school supervisor:

“... We do not have specific teachers for adjustment cases. Instead, what we do have is only classroom teachers and religion teachers. This is why the classroom teachers always handle the adjustment cases in cooperation with the religion teachers” (Interview, 2022).

Second, the interviews also depicted that the public elementary schools in Indonesia do not have specific spaces (Guidance and Counseling Rooms) for handling student adjustment. As stated by one of the participants, who was a Classroom Teacher:

“... Up to now, the adjustment cases are handled in either the teacher’s office or the school clinic. However, if student adjustment involves the student’s parents or guardians, it will be done in either the school clinic or the Principal’s office” (Interview, 2022).

These findings indicated that the guidance and counseling teachers and the guidance and counseling rooms for handling student adjustment were unavailable in public elementary schools. Table 5 shows relevant data.

According to Table 5, there needed to be a more professional staff, guidance, and counseling teachers in public elementary schools, encouraging that class-teachers handle all adjustment problems. In contrast, elementary school students’ adjustment problems have demanded a complex handling process. This finding explains why class teacher and religious teachers could only partially solve the adjustment cases. For example, one of the participants, a Classroom Teacher, states:

“... Up to now, student adjustment cases, such as low motivation in learning, have been handled in the teacher’s or principal’s office” (Interview, 2022).

Such response asserted that the absence of guidance and counseling teachers and rooms has abandoned or limited the effective handling of adjustment problems in public elementary schools.

Indeed, the absence of guidance and counseling teachers and rooms is closely associated with successfully handling student adjustment cases

in public elementary schools. This finding has been supported by the statement from one of the participants, a school principal:

“... We do not have guidance and counseling teachers. No policy requires recruiting guidance and counseling teachers (for the public elementary school – translator). We only have a policy that requires the recruitment of classroom teachers. Since we only have the teacher’s and principal’s office and school clinic for student adjustment cases, we will involve the classroom teacher and the religion teacher to solve such cases in the given room” (Interview, 2022).

4.3. The student neglect in self-adjustment

Data showed several adjustment cases needing to be handled more seriously among the students. These cases are: (1) bullying their peers by mocking their parents’ name, (2) brawling, (3) stealing some money from either the teachers or the peers, (4) vandalizing the school facilities, (5) suffering from cognitive delay, (4) messing up the classroom, (5) committing sexual harassment, and (6) being undisciplined. These adjustment cases were handled by classroom teachers who needed to be more expert in guidance and counseling. At the same time, they should also fulfill their teaching duties and their class-teacher obligations. Even in some cases, the school principals, the religious teachers, the civic education teachers, and the sports teachers were also involved in handling the student adjustment problems. These findings asserted that handling adjustment problems in Indonesian public elementary schools have yet to be based on the standard handling flowchart. The experts needed the standard flowcharts to handle the adjustment problems in specific rooms. Table 6 provides the details of the findings.

Table 6 shows that the absence of case-handling guidelines and handling professionalism are barriers to student adjustment. The former has related to the most decisive domain regarding steps, methods, and

TABLE 5 Student neglect in school competence.

| No. | Name of public elementary school | Professional staffs | Case-handling room |
|-----|--|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Karangayu Public Elementary School Semarang | None | None |
| 2. | Bangetayu Public Elementary School Semarang | None | None |
| 3. | Krapyak Public Elementary School Semarang | None | None |
| 4. | Lemponsari Public Elementary School Semarang | None | None |
| 5. | Mangkang Public Elementary School Semarang | None | None |
| 6. | Kapasari 1,292 Public Elementary School Surabaya | None | None |
| 7. | Jepara I90 Public Elementary School Surabaya | None | None |
| 8. | Kaliasin I280 Public Elementary School Surabaya | None | None |
| 9. | Dr. Sutomo I Public Elementary School Surabaya | None | None |
| 10. | Babatan I Public Elementary School Surabaya | None | None |
| 11. | Cempaka Baru 03 Public Elementary School Jakarta | None | None |
| 12. | Cempaka Baru 01 Public Elementary School Jakarta | None | None |
| 13. | Cempaka Baru 05 Public Elementary School Jakarta | None | None |
| 14. | Cempaka Baru 07 Public Elementary School Jakarta | None | None |
| 15. | Cempaka Baru 11 Public Elementary School Jakarta | None | None |

Source: The researchers’ compilation, 2022.

TABLE 6 Student neglect in the adjustment cases.

| No | Source | Case | Handling | Meaning |
|-----|--------------|---|---|--|
| 1. | Informant 1 | Some Grade 4 students in Public Elementary school were fighting and taking turns mocking their parents' names. | These students were reprimanded not to mock their parents' names again. | The case still needs to be solved, but it was considered done. |
| 2. | Informant 2 | The students in a public elementary school had some brawls with those from another public elementary school. | These students were confronted and reconciled. | The case still needs to be solved, but it was considered done. |
| 3. | Informant 3 | A student stole some money from his peer because he was not provided with any allowance that day. | The stolen money should be returned to the rightful owner. | The case still needs to be solved, but it is considered done. |
| 4. | Informant 4 | Some students were playing and breaking the lamp in the classroom. | These students should replace the broken lamp with the new one. | The case still needs to be solved, but it was considered done. |
| 5. | Informant 5 | A male student was asked to sit next to a female student, but he was so afraid of being bullied that he did not come to school. | The Principal only stated, "If he does not want to come, he has to be transferred to another public elementary school." | The case still needs to be solved, but it was considered done. |
| 6. | Informant 6 | The student could not attend the lesson (to understand the lesson's content). | The Principal invited the parents to the school and later transferred the student. | The case still needs to be solved, but it was considered done. |
| 7. | Informant 7 | The students were mischievous or noisy in the classroom. | They were grounded by standing in front of the classroom. | The case still needs to be solved, but it was considered done. |
| 8. | Informant 8 | The student stole the teacher's money. | The parents were called to replace the amount of stolen money. | The case still needs to be solved, but it was considered done. |
| 9. | Informant 9 | A male student liked to touch the genitals of a female student, causing the female student to be discouraged from coming to school. | The Principal called the male student's parents to warn them that the male student must not repeat his "habit" anymore. | The case still needs to be solved, but it was considered done. |
| 10. | Informant 10 | A male Grade 6 student grew his hair and nails and wore his cap inappropriately. | The class teacher invited the sports teacher to call the student and reprimand him for not repeating such a habit. | The case still needs to be solved, but it was considered done. |

techniques in handling a single adjustment case. The absence of such a domain has led to unclear case handling, resulting in inappropriate handling. The latter, such as the guidance and counseling teachers, have rendered the handling undirected and incomplete. As a result, the adjustment case has been finally considered done and then abandoned, as stated by one of the participants:

"... One classroom consists of 25–30 students, and such a figure is sufficient to be handled by a single homeroom teacher. Therefore, we do not need any guidance and counseling teacher in the meantime" (Interview, 2022).

In addition, another informant states:

"... The senior public elementary school teachers have undergone the Teacher Education School and have completed the course of Didactic Methodic, Pedagogy, and Child Handling" (interview, 2022).

The two responses asserted that student neglect in adjustment problems originated from whether it is necessary to afford professional handling.

Furthermore, the problems of students' adjustment that need to be resolved thoroughly and those that are neglected have shown that there is a connection between the absence of regulations and handling mechanisms and the absence of guidance and counseling teachers in public elementary schools. The absence of regulations and mechanisms for handling adjustment problems has resulted in unclear handling responsibilities. The role of class teachers, religious teachers, or school principals needs to be formulated because no single regulation recommends how student adjustments should be made. Moreover, this issue contributes to the incomplete handling of adjustment cases. The

data showed that case handling needed to be followed through the guidance and counseling procedures in the specific guidance and counseling rooms. Sometimes, the adjustment case was handled in the teacher's or principal's office or the school clinic. Finally, the case still needs to be solved, but it was considered done. This claim was one-sided from either the class teacher or the school principal. Such a situation clearly showed the neglected students in different adjustment problems.

5. Discussion

This study highlighted three important dimensions related to student neglect in adjustment: (1) lack of case-handling regulations and mechanisms, (2) lack of guidance and counseling teachers and rooms, and (3) incomplete and less optimal problem solutions. The results showed student neglect in self-adjustment in Indonesian public elementary schools. Thus, this issue should be evaluated by the teaching staff and educational institutions.

Unawareness, ignorance, and misunderstanding among the caretakers of an educational institution have contributed to student neglect related to adjustment case-handling regulations and mechanisms in public elementary schools. The caretakers' unawareness of student neglect in adjustment has given birth to the assumption that case-handling regulations and mechanisms in the school are unimportant. The results of several studies (Bland et al., 2018; (Xiang et al., 2020)) asserted that such neglect has emerged by the absence of a good in-care

system for the students. In addition, [Wahungu et al. \(2020\)](#) reported that government concern and awareness play an important role in creating a well-qualified education that ensured students' security and comfort in the learning process.

The lack of guidance and counseling teachers and rooms was triggered by the tradition of the elementary education system that paid less attention to the students. This finding is in line with the results of [Kapur's research \(2011\)](#) which stated that the education system in Asian countries, including Indonesia, has not been able to provide a safe space to ensure the welfare of students. Meanwhile, the absence of guidance and counseling teachers as well as space for dealing with adjustment problems have hindered the realization of child-friendly schools. Traditions of such educational systems have made student adjustments trivial; as a result, the case has been taken up by anyone at the school. Unfortunately, the education system like this has not been seriously considered by the government. In fact, neglecting on student adjustment problems is very risky and dangerous for their psychological future ([Braga et al., 2018](#); [Kang et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, the community have viewed that guidance and counseling teachers are no longer needed. Because the class teacher has been considered more than sufficient to solve student adjustment problems. Until now, this belief has influenced how student adjustment problems are handled, which tend to be formalistic, administratively oriented, and simplified.

Relational problems from the educational institution to the community, the school principal to the parents, have caused student neglect. Moreover, they needed to have a proper relationship with students. The disconnected and neglected relationship strengthened student adjustment case-handling patterns from the perspective of top-down policy. The top-down policy holded that student adjustment should be viewed and solved based on the perspective of the educational institution, school principal, and classroom teacher. Therefore, the student's perspective was seen as unimportant in solving the case. Such a condition was different from the recommendation from [Nylund et al. \(2018, p. 184\)](#), which stated that when children were given the right to voice their rights, they would speak and give important statements for solving the adjustment cases.

These results could serve as important indicators in reviewing government policies that viewed student adjustment tools in schools as less important. [Kapur \(2011\)](#) considered the reasons such as limited funding unacceptable for the adjustment cases in Indonesia. Furthermore, the reasons, such as the educational, socio-cultural, and political traditions, that did not favor the students' interests should be put aside for academic achievement. Moreover, how to handle student adjustment should be formulated. At the same time, the recruitment of guidance and counseling teachers and the provision of specific guidance and counseling rooms should be afforded. Furthermore, the legislative and the executive or the government should devise a law that handles adjustment cases in elementary education since this issue has been given less attention. If it was deemed necessary, the government should allocate a special fund for creating a child-friendly school; so that the children or the students can feel physically and psychologically comfortable and secure.

6. Conclusion

As the educational service provider for the students, the school could not deal with student adjustment problems. This study found

that the unavailability of students' basic needs is a form of neglect and harassment. Public elementary schools lacked the professional staff and a mechanism to address students' adjustment problems. This condition presented unsolved adjustment problems that endanger future students' psychological aspects. Therefore, as one of the educational institutions in charge, the school needed to be fully well-functioning.

Furthermore, the study opens a new space for prospective studies to evaluate student adjustment in public elementary schools since few studies investigated student adjustment as a crucial factor that might affect students' future. At the same time, the study also opens a critical evaluation of the condition of elementary education in Indonesia. Such critical evaluation enables mapping the risks and dangers that threaten the students and how the public elementary schools ensure quality improvement by continuously creating safe and comfortable spaces for the children. Furthermore, through critical evaluation, the mission of elementary education to make a generation of intelligence and personality might be achieved.

At last, the limits of the present study are related to the data source and the analysis method. First, the study data were only uncovered through documentation and in-depth interview. Moreover, documents were just associated with the available regulations and mechanisms in handling student adjustment problems in public elementary schools. Second, the data related to the guidance and counseling teachers and the guidance and counseling rooms, as well as the data related to the adjustment cases, were only obtained from the in-depth interview. These data have yet to be uncovered from the participatory observation with the phenomenology approach. Third, data analysis was only based on exploring the aspects that encouraged student neglect without any emphasis on solutions. Therefore, further studies should cover the gap found in the present study through conceptual and contextual approaches.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/[Supplementary material](#), further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study involving human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent to participate in this study was not required from the participants in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

Author contributions

II and RK conceptualized the article and wrote the first draft. II, DD, and EW reviewed the preliminary version and developed methodological and theoretical perspectives. All authors contributed to the interpretation and analysis of the empirical data. All authors finalized and edited the paper.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2023.1092395/full#supplementary-material>

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