

Representation of Burnout among Adolescents in East Java

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ABSTRACT

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Burnout among adolescents is a psychosocial issue that is increasingly prominent in conjunction with the mounting academic, social, and existential pressures experienced by the younger generation. The objective of this study is to elucidate the manner in which the concept of burnout is articulated within the discourse of adolescents aged 18 to 20 years in East Java, employing the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach by Teun A. van Dijk (2008). This methodological approach facilitates the analysis of the relationship between text structure, social cognition, and the social context surrounding discourse production. The data were collected through in-depth interviews, social media posts, and observation of teenagers' verbal interactions in various contexts. The results of the analysis demonstrate that the phenomenon of burnout is interpreted as an inherent condition within the process of "becoming an adult," which is characterized by high levels of stress and demand. A close textual analysis revealed the presence of linguistic patterns, including metaphors, hyperbole, and diction, that are indicative of chronic fatigue and feelings of alienation. At the level of social cognition, the phenomenon of burnout is conceptualized as a normal experience, albeit one that is often not openly discussed, reflecting the internalization of stigma surrounding mental vulnerability. Concurrently, within the sociocultural milieu, the prevailing influences that shape the emergence of such discourses include pressures from the education system, familial expectations, and the competitive cultural environment. The findings emphasize the necessity for critical discourse literacy-based interventions to facilitate constructive dialogue on adolescent mental health.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of burnout has emerged as a salient concern within the domain of mental health discourse, particularly in the past two decades. The concept was initially developed in the professional context, particularly in occupations characterized by high workload and significant emotional demands, such as medicine, education, and social work. However, recent social and cultural developments have demonstrated that burnout is no longer exclusive to the productive age group or the formal workforce. The symptoms of burnout are now also prevalent among adolescents, especially those in the transition phase to early adulthood. The condition is typified by elevated levels of emotional exhaustion, diminished motivation, feelings of helplessness, and a decline in interest in activities that were previously engaging.

Burnout in adolescents is a multifaceted phenomenon, given that adolescence is a period characterized by significant biological, psychological, and social changes. Adolescents are in a phase of identity exploration, searching for the meaning of life, and achieving emotional and social independence. Adolescents frequently experience mounting pressure from multiple sources, including family, school, peers, and social media, which can significantly impact their life decisions and the fulfilment of external expectations. Conversely, they may lack the psychological capacity or coping strategies necessary to effectively address these demands. Consequently, burnout has become an increasingly

prevalent condition, yet it is often not properly recognized due to the perception of its symptoms as “laziness” or “lack of motivation.”

This phenomenon is also evident in East Java. As one of the most populous provinces in Indonesia, East Java is home to a sizable and heterogeneous adolescent population, characterized by significant social, economic, and cultural diversity. This diversity has implications for the variety of experiences and pressures faced by adolescents in their daily lives. The mounting pressures stemming from a competitive education system, familial expectations of academic and professional success, and pervasive exposure to social media have contributed to the escalating prevalence of mental and emotional burnout among adolescents. Adolescent burnout is a significant yet often marginalized issue in public discourse. Researchers have identified a lack of opportunities for adolescents to articulate and reflect on their experiences with burnout.

In this context, discourse analysis is a pertinent and significant approach. The concept of burnout can be comprehended through a variety of lenses, including psychological and statistical approaches. However, a significant aspect of understanding this phenomenon is to consider the way in which adolescents speak about and narrate their experiences with burnout. The discourse formed by adolescents, whether in the form of writing on social media, informal conversations, or responses to social pressure, reflects how they internalize, negotiate, and respond to the burnout experience. Language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for creating and maintaining social reality. Consequently, an examination of adolescents' discourse on burnout can facilitate a more profound comprehension of their conceptualizations of meaning and value systems, in addition to the social pressures they encounter.

To critically examine the representation of burnout, this research employs the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach of Teun A. van Dijk's model. This model provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for the analysis of text, social cognition, and social context in a simultaneous manner. Van Dijk conceptualizes discourse as the consequence of interactions between linguistic structures and socio-political contexts, as well as a mechanism to perpetuate or contest power relations. In the context of adolescent burnout, this model enables analysis of how narratives of burnout are constructed, how meanings are exchanged within adolescent social groups, and how contexts such as the education system, social media, and cultural values play a role in shaping the experience of burnout. A crucial element of van Dijk's methodology is the emphasis on social cognition, defined as the collective knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs that are formed and maintained within society. This social cognition exerts a significant influence on the manner in which individuals comprehend and construct meaning in their discourse. In the context of this research, it is imperative to examine how East Java adolescents collectively comprehend and interpret burnout, whether they perceive it as a deficiency, a natural state, or a form of resistance to an oppressive system. This understanding is imperative in formulating an intervention approach that is not solely based on the individual, but also takes into account the social and cultural constructions that surround the burnout experience.

Today, social media is a key platform for discourse. Adolescents utilize digital platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube for purposes including self-expression, the sharing of experiences, and the seeking of support. These media have given rise to discourses surrounding burnout, stress, and the challenges in coping with social

expectations. These narratives, frequently conveyed with elements of irony, sarcasm, or humor, serve as archetypal representations of adolescent burnout. However, beneath the surface, there is a seriousness concerning the psychosocial conditions of adolescents. Consequently, social media emerges as a significant source of data in this research, facilitating a more comprehensive and authentic exploration of representations of burnout.

This research is not only academically significant but also has practical value in designing policies and programs to assist adolescents who are more sensitive to their needs and experiences. Historically, approaches to adolescent mental health have been characterized by a top-down structure, with a paucity of attention paid to the voices and perspectives of adolescents themselves. By examining how adolescents conceptualize burnout in their discourse, we can identify discrepancies between their experiences and societal perceptions or existing policies. This initiative will facilitate the implementation of a participatory, dialogical, and contextualized approach to enhancing adolescent mental well-being in Indonesia, particularly in East Java..

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using critical discourse analysis (CDA) based on Teun A. van Dijk's model. The purpose of this design is to explore how burnout is represented in the narratives and expressions of adolescents aged 18–20 years in East Java, both through personal interviews and social media content. The research emphasizes how language, power, and cognition interplay in adolescents' articulation of psychological exhaustion and stress.

Data were collected using two main techniques:

- In-depth interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 adolescents (aged 18–20) from various urban and rural areas in East Java. The interviews aimed to elicit personal experiences, expressions, and perceptions related to burnout in academic and social contexts.
- Content analysis of social media: Posts, tweets, and captions from platforms such as Twitter and Instagram were selected purposively. Only publicly available content authored by adolescents within the age range and located in East Java were included. The search focused on keywords such as “*capek mental*”, “*burnout*”, “*gak kuat kuliah*”, and “*lelah banget*”.

Burnout in Adolescents

Although initially developed in the professional context, the phenomenon of burnout has since gained recognition as a significant issue among students. Pines and Aronson (1988) posit that burnout can occur in individuals who are “intensely involved in work or activities that demand great emotional commitment.” Within the context of adolescents, such activities may encompass intensive academic pursuits, involvement in organizational frameworks, or the demands posed by the social environment.

According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), the phenomenon of academic burnout in adolescents is typified by a diminution of interest in academic pursuits, a state of exhaustion when confronted with academic obligations, and a pervasive sense of academic failure. Adolescents who experience burnout tend to exhibit a loss of motivation, withdrawal

from the social environment, and the presence of psychosomatic symptoms such as insomnia, headaches, and impaired concentration.

Contemporary studies of burnout adopt a multifaceted approach, encompassing not only psychological dimensions but also linguistic and socio-cultural facets. The manifestations of burnout in the vernacular, social media discourse, and adolescent dialogues can serve as a conduit for understanding how adolescents comprehend and interpret their experiences of burnout. According to Fairclough (1995); van Dijk (2008), language not only reflects reality, but also shapes social reality. Consequently, discourse analysis is imperative to elucidate the power relations and meaning construction underlying the utterances or texts produced by adolescents.

Social Media and The Construction of Burnout in Adolescents

In the digital age, social media plays a significant role in shaping and disseminating discourses on mental health. According to the findings of Boyd (2014), social media constitutes a participatory space wherein adolescents engage in the negotiation of identities and the sharing of personal experiences, including those pertaining to burnout, stress, and anxiety. Discourses concerning burnout frequently manifest in the form of memes, rants, or extensive threads that elicit substantial responses, thereby suggesting that these experiences are collective rather than individualized.

Repeated exposure to narratives portraying burnout as a natural aspect of modern teenage life can lead to its perceived normalcy. Conversely, these narratives can also function as a form of resistance or criticism of a system that demands constant productivity. This perspective aligns with Foucault's (1977) assertion that discourse serves as a medium for the ongoing interaction between power and resistance.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) van Dijk (2008)

According to Van Dijk (1998), critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a method that enables the examination of the interrelationship between text structure, social cognition, and social context in the formation of meaning. This model explores the interplay among ideology, power, and social inequality in shaping individual speech and thought. In the context of burnout, CDA can be utilized to examine how narratives of exhaustion, distress, and mental struggle are expressed and disseminated in adolescent communities, particularly through social media.

Van Dijk (2009) underlines that texts do not exist in isolation, but are instead influenced by "macro social structures," such as the education system, popular culture, and societal norms. To illustrate, consider the following example: A teenager might assert, "I am experiencing significant fatigue, yet I am compelled to maintain a strong demeanor." This statement does not merely represent an individual's personal sentiment; rather, it is a manifestation of the societal pressures and cultural expectations that dictate the value of resilience and high performance.

Within the framework of adolescent burnout representation, van Dijk's theory facilitates the comprehension of how adolescents interpret, narrate, and rationalize their experiences of burnout through the medium of language. This model is particularly salient in its integration of macro (social structure) and micro (discourse structure) aspects concurrently (van Dijk, 2009).

Textual Structure

In van Dijk's model, the text structure is comprised of three levels: macro structure, which delineates the overarching theme of the text; superstructure, which encompasses the narrative framework, including the introduction, body, and conclusion; and micro structure, which encompasses linguistic aspects such as word choice, sentences, and language style.

In researching the representation of adolescent burnout, the aspects analyzed include:

- The main themes of their narratives (e.g., academic burnout, social pressure, feelings of failure),
- Narrative patterns (whether they start with personal experiences and then move towards social reflections),
- Lexical choices (whether they use words like "really tired," "mentally down," "forced to be strong," etc.).

Van Dijk emphasizes that word choice and sentence structure are not neutral, but reflect a certain ideological position.

Social Cognition

Aspects of social cognition refer to the shared knowledge structures that exist within social groups. Social cognition mediates between discourse structures and social structures (van Dijk, 1998:24). These structures include beliefs, values, norms, and ideologies that are collectively held by a particular community. Within the context of adolescents, this phenomenon encompasses their comprehension of concepts related to "burnout," "demands," and "success." Additionally, it explores how these comprehension processes are influenced by institutional factors, including educational institutions, familial structures, and the influence of social media.

Social Context

Discourse is not produced or interpreted in a vacuum. It is always embedded in a society, a culture, a history, a politics (van Dijk, 2008:12). Van Dijk's discourse analysis is invariably associated with the broader social context, specifically the power system, ideological relations, and social structures that influence the production and interpretation of discourse.

Representation in Critical Discourse Analysis

In the CDA model developed by Teun A. van Dijk, representation is not conceptualized as an individual process, but rather as a consequence of the interplay among discourse structure, social cognition, and social context. This suggests that discourse representation is indicative of how individuals and groups interpret reality based on their experiences, ideologies, and the social structure in which they reside.

Specifically, representations of burnout in adolescents' discourse demonstrate not only their personal experiences with the condition, but also the ways in which they interpret and contextualize these experiences based on social influences, including educational pressures, parental expectations, and societal norms surrounding productivity. In this context, the words adolescents use to describe burnout are not just emotional expressions, but also a reflection of the social structures that shape the way they think and speak.

Representations of burnout among adolescents, particularly those that appear repeatedly across social media platforms and in group conversations, are part of a collective perception shaped by the social cognition of young people living under significant social and academic pressure.

The concept of burnout is intricately linked to notions of identity and power relations. In a society that places a high value on productivity and success from an early age, adolescents are frequently regarded as individuals who “must be strong,” “must be able,” or “must not give up.” When individuals articulate experiences of voice burnout, they are not merely recounting their personal encounters. Instead, they are also offering a critique of the prevailing societal narratives that engender oppression.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study methodically analyses the representation of burnout experienced by adolescents in East Java aged 18-20. The analysis is informed by two main sources: in-depth interviews with 100 participants and a comprehensive analysis of social media posts (Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok) containing keywords such as “burnout,” “*benar-benar lelah*,” “overthinking,” and “*capek maksimal*”. The data were subsequently subjected to analysis employing van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, which encompasses three dimensions: discourse structure, social cognition, and social context.

- Discourse structure : Macro and Microstructure

Macrostructure (Main Topics)

The following major subjects were identified through the analysis of the data:

- a. The phenomenon of academic pressure and family expectations has been a subject of considerable interest in recent years.
- b. The phenomenon of emotional exhaustion, precipitated by the undertaking of multiple tasks concurrently, has been observed in individuals engaged in academic pursuits, part-time employment, and social activities.
- c. The phenomenon of unproductivity is characterized by a sense of aimlessness and a lack of direction.

The following is an example of the aforementioned phenomenon, as illustrated in a recent Twitter post:

- [1] “*Tiap hari bangun tidur tuh rasanya kayak diseret. Bukannya males, tapi rasanya capek yang ga kelar-kelar. Burnout beneran.*”
- [2] “*Sumpah demotivated bangettt. Ga ada habisnya. Capek mulu tiap hari*”
- [3] “*Beneran deh ini hidup ga da santainya. Nafas aja rasanya capek*”

These statements exemplify a chronic form of burnout, which cannot be attributed merely to laziness. Rather, it is indicative of a form of helplessness in the face of the pressures of daily life. This theme is evident in the majority of the data, suggesting that burnout has evolved into a shared experience among adolescents.

Micro Structure

A close examination of the microstructure reveals a consistent pattern of linguistic expression characterized by emotional and reflective diction. To illustrate this point, consider the following example:

- a. The use of words such as “mental drop,” “overwhelmed,” “hampa,” “robot,” and “muak” is notable. These words are used repeatedly in the text.
- b. Hyperbolic sentences such as “*Hidup ini kayaknya cuman soal kerjaan doang, tugas, tugas, tugas,*” or “*Gimana bisa hidup jd begini kejam?*” reflect feelings of stagnation and loss of meaning in life.
- c. The linguistic style exhibited a combination of personal narrative and dark humour, which served as a coping mechanism. For instance, one participant stated the following: “*Nyoba ngejokes soal burnout biar banyak yang notice, lucu sih. Padahal aslinya mah udah ga kuatttt, help!*”

This phenomenon underscores the notion that the discourse surrounding adolescent burnout not only conveys an authentic emotional reality but also demonstrates the social processes through which adolescents navigate and express their suffering.

Social Cognition

According to van Dijk (2008), social cognition is a shared mental structure within a group. In this context, teenagers in East Java form a collective scheme that:

- Burnout is normal among young people.
- Productivity is a must, even at the expense of mental health.
- Rest is often seen as a weakness or a luxury.

From the interview, one respondent stated:

“*Gw ngerasa berdosa banget ini kalo ga sibuk beginiii, kayak ga berharga jadi manusia. Tapi kalo sibuk mulu juga capek banget. Ampun deh*”

These remarks suggest an inner conflict between the need to rest and social norms that glorify busyness. This reinforces the idea that burnout does not arise in a vacuum, but is influenced by the social and cultural values attached to young people.

Social media posts also reinforce this scheme. Many posts include hashtags such as #productiveaja #capekbanget #anakmudahebat that show how adolescents internalize the demand to always appear strong, even when experiencing extreme fatigue.

Social Context ; Structural Pressure and Productivity Culture

The final dimension in van Dijk's (2008) model underscores the significance of social context. In this case, the phenomenon of burnout experienced by adolescents cannot be understood without considering the systemic pressures to which they are subjected, such as:

- a. The nation's educational system is characterized by a competitive environment, marked by a strong emphasis on academic excellence and a culture of high achievement.
- b. The phenomenon of social pressure, as it is influenced by digital media, is a subject that merits further examination.
- c. The family's expectations of “success” at a young age are a significant factor in the subject's development.

CONCLUSION

The analysis indicates that the manifestation of burnout in adolescents in East Java is characterized by the presence of strong narratives, both individual and collective in nature. Utilizing van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis approach, it can be discerned that the phenomenon of burnout is influenced by the interplay among language structure, the social cognition of youth groups, and systemic social pressure. The discourse surrounding burnout does not merely signify a state of exhaustion; it also functions as a form of resistance to a system that demands perpetual productivity. Through language and social media, adolescents establish a forum for the articulation of their psychological conditions, albeit with a paucity of substantive solutions from the social system itself.

A critical finding of this study is that social media functions as a cathartic space, offering adolescents a sense of safety to articulate feelings of burnout without facing immediate stigmatization. In the context of digital spaces, these individuals exhibit a propensity for greater openness in their communication compared to their behaviour in real-life settings.

Nevertheless, this phenomenon also poses a significant challenge, as substantial expressions of burnout on social media can lead to the normalization of suffering. When individuals experience fatigue and mental exhaustion, burnout can be regarded as a prevalent condition that no longer warrants urgent consideration.

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