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Coping Strategies in Overcoming Loneliness of Out-of-Town Students: A Case Study at Pelita Bangsa University

Halimah

Universitas Pelita Bangsa, Indonesia
listian.achmad@pelitabangsa.ac.id

Imroatun Nafia

Universitas Pelita Bangsa, Indonesia
listian.achmad@pelitabangsa.ac.id

Saiful Mukhtali

Universitas Pelita Bangsa, Indonesia
listian.achmad@pelitabangsa.ac.id

Listian Indriyani Achmad

Universitas Pelita Bangsa, Indonesia
listian.achmad@pelitabangsa.ac.id

Abstract

Keywords:
Loneliness,
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Students,
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Strategies

Loneliness is a psychological challenge often experienced by out-of-town university students. Being far from family, they often feel isolated and struggle to adapt to a new environment. This study aims to analyze the experiences of loneliness among students at FIKT, Pelita Bangsa University, including its causes and coping strategies. This research employs a qualitative phenomenological approach, involving 90 students through questionnaires and unstructured interviews. The findings indicate that loneliness is caused by physical and emotional distance from family, a lack of meaningful activities, and difficulties in building social connections. Loneliness affects students' moods, learning motivation, and physical health. Coping strategies include engaging in productive activities, building social relationships, and seeking support from campus communities. Positive social interactions and the role of the campus environment are key factors in overcoming loneliness. Social support proves to be essential in maintaining students' psychological well-being.

Abstrak

Kata Kunci: Kesepian, Mahasiswa Perantau, Strategi Koping

Kesepian merupakan tantangan psikologis yang sering dialami oleh mahasiswa perantau. Berada jauh dari keluarga membuat mereka sering merasa terisolasi dan kesulitan beradaptasi dengan lingkungan baru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengalaman kesepian pada mahasiswa FIKT Universitas Pelita Bangsa, termasuk penyebab dan strategi coping yang mereka lakukan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis dengan melibatkan 90 mahasiswa melalui kuesioner dan wawancara tidak terstruktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesepian disebabkan oleh jarak fisik dan emosional dari keluarga, kurangnya aktivitas yang bermakna, serta kesulitan dalam membangun hubungan sosial. Kesepian berdampak pada suasana hati mahasiswa, motivasi belajar, dan kesehatan fisik. Strategi coping yang dilakukan meliputi keterlibatan dalam aktivitas produktif, membangun hubungan sosial, serta mencari dukungan dari komunitas kampus. Interaksi sosial yang positif dan peran lingkungan kampus menjadi faktor kunci dalam mengatasi kesepian. Dukungan sosial terbukti penting dalam menjaga kesejahteraan psikologis mahasiswa.

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Introduction

According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), a university student is an individual officially enrolled in a higher education institution, polytechnic, or other tertiary educational institutions and is undertaking studies to obtain an academic degree. Once enrolled, students have rights and obligations, such as access to campus facilities and the responsibility to attend lectures properly. One of the primary obligations is to submit assignments given by lecturers as part of the learning process and academic evaluation.

University students are considered an elite group in society due to their higher education level, which enables them to think critically and objectively in addressing various societal issues. Additionally, students are viewed as an educated group capable of making positive contributions through their thoughts and actions to societal development. As part of the academic community, they

are not only seen as learners but also as intellectuals with great potential. This status often provides them with opportunities for various social and professional roles, making them important agents of change in shaping the nation's future.

In this era of globalization, many students choose to pursue higher education away from their hometowns, requiring them to live independently for a certain period. These students, known as out-of-town students, must quickly adapt and develop independence to achieve optimal academic results.

However, separation from their familiar environment and lack of social support often make out-of-town students vulnerable to feelings of loneliness. This loneliness can be a significant challenge affecting their psychological well-being, especially when they struggle to build new relationships in an unfamiliar setting. Research indicates that loneliness can have a substantial negative impact on students' mental health, increasing the risk of depression and anxiety.

Loneliness is a common phenomenon among out-of-town students, especially when they leave their homes and familiar surroundings to continue their studies. These students often face adaptation challenges in their new environment, which can lead to feelings of isolation and a lack of social support. Studies show that loneliness negatively impacts students' mental health and psychological well-being, increasing their risk of depression and anxiety (Vanhalst, 2015).

Loneliness is a common experience faced by out-of-town students. It can also be understood as a feeling of dissatisfaction with existing social relationships. When students leave home to study in a new environment, they often lose access to the social support they need, making them vulnerable to loneliness.

In Indonesia, loneliness among university students has also become an important issue. Research by Halim and Dariyo (2016) indicates a significant correlation between psychological well-being and loneliness among out-of-town students. Students who feel connected to others tend to have higher

psychological well-being, while those experiencing loneliness suffer a decline in mental health(Nadhilah, 2024).

Research conducted by Shafiananta et al. (2024) at Universitas Negeri Semarang highlights loneliness as a problem faced by newly arrived out-of-town students. The study encourages these students to communicate openly, efficiently, and productively and to build social relationships that can reduce feelings of isolation(Shafiananta, 2024).

A study by Ade Melani (2024) at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia examines the relationship between social support, resilience (hardiness), and psychological well-being in out-of-town students. The study, using a quantitative approach, finds a significant positive correlation between social support, resilience, and psychological well-being. The higher the level of social support and resilience a student has, the better their psychological well-being(Shafiananta, 2024).

This phenomenon of loneliness not only affects individuals emotionally but can also impact students' academic performance. Failure to build strong social relationships can hinder their engagement in campus activities, which in turn affects their academic achievements. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of loneliness among out-of-town students and how it affects their psychological well-being is crucial.

This research aims to analyze loneliness and coping strategies among out-of-town students at the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology, Universitas Pelita Bangsa. By deeply understanding the factors influencing loneliness and psychological well-being, this study hopes to formulate interventions such as increasing social interactions, engaging in more activities with classmates during free time, and contributing to reducing loneliness levels while improving students' psychological well-being during their studies.

Method

This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach aimed at exploring and deeply understanding the experiences and perspectives of out-of-town students at the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training (FIKT), Universitas Pelita Bangsa, regarding the challenges of loneliness they face, as this approach enables the exploration of subjective meanings perceived by participants and provides a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of loneliness and the coping strategies they apply.

The subjects of this study are out-of-town students actively studying at FIKT who come from regions outside the university's location, selected through a purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives, namely 90 students aged between 18–25 years, having at least one year of experience living outside their hometown without immediate family accompaniment, experiencing feelings of loneliness in their daily lives, and being willing to participate in the study; this technique ensures that informants possess relevant experiences that can clarify the impact of loneliness on their psychological well-being and daily lives. Data collection techniques include questionnaires and unstructured interviews, where the questionnaire is used to gather initial data on students' levels of loneliness, contributing factors, and coping strategies through a combination of closed-ended questions to obtain quantitative data and open-ended questions to explore qualitative experiences covering social and emotional loneliness dimensions, while unstructured interviews allow flexible, in-depth conversations that enable respondents to freely share their perspectives and experiences in their own words, resulting in richer and more diverse information. Data analysis follows a thematic approach involving data reduction to filter and organize relevant information, coding and categorization to label and group data related to loneliness, challenges, and coping strategies, thematic analysis to identify emerging themes such as causes of loneliness, psychological impacts, and coping efforts, and data presentation in descriptive narratives illustrating the students' experiences. This study was

conducted at FIKT, Universitas Pelita Bangsa, with flexible interview locations either on campus or in other comfortable places for participants, and was carried out over a two-month period with data collection divided between questionnaire distribution and interviews.

Result and Discussion

The results of the research on the challenges of loneliness faced by out-of-town students at FIKT Universitas Pelita Bangsa will be elaborated in detail. This study aims to understand the experiences of out-of-town students regarding the phenomenon of loneliness, the factors influencing it, and the strategies they use to overcome these challenges.

The research data were obtained through questionnaires and unstructured interviews. The questionnaires were used to identify the level of loneliness and its contributing factors, while unstructured interviews allowed the researcher to explore students' experiences flexibly without being bound by rigid questions. This technique provided respondents with the opportunity to share their stories more freely, resulting in richer and more in-depth data.

The discussion in this chapter covers five main aspects as follows:

Table 1. Observation Results

Aspect of Interest	Observation Results
Frequency of Loneliness Among Out-of-Town Students	<p>According to the questionnaire and interview data, the frequency of loneliness experienced by out-of-town students indicates a high vulnerability to feelings of loneliness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of respondents reported feeling lonely 3-5 times a week.

- 25% experienced loneliness 1-2 times a week.
- 12.5% felt lonely almost every day.
- 12.5% only experienced loneliness 1-2 times a month.
- No respondents stated that they never felt lonely.

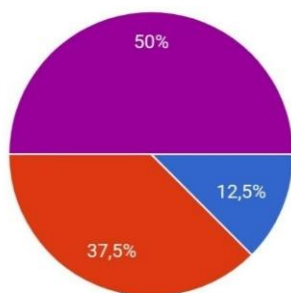
These results indicate that loneliness is a common phenomenon among out-of-town students. Initially, they often struggle to adapt to the campus environment and being away from their families. Without close social support, they are more vulnerable to feelings of isolation. The high frequency of loneliness not only affects their quality of life but can also reduce productivity levels and negatively impact their mental health.

If not properly managed, loneliness can deteriorate students' quality of life. Those who experience persistent loneliness are at higher risk of developing psychological issues such as anxiety and depression. Therefore, it is crucial for universities to provide various forms of support, such as counseling services or student

	<p>communities, to help them feel more connected</p>
<p>Factors Contributing to Loneliness</p>	<p>Based on the questionnaire and interview results, the main factors contributing to loneliness among out-of-town students include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>➤ Being away from family (62.5%) : The majority of students feel lonely due to the absence of direct interaction with family, who typically provide emotional support.</p> <p>➤ Lack of activities during free time (50%) : Many students report feeling lonely when they have no activities to fill their free time.</p> <p>➤ Difficulty forming close friendships (12.5%) : Some students struggle to develop deeper relationships with their peers on campus.</p> <p>➤ Cultural or social value differences (12.5%) : Students from different cultural backgrounds find it challenging to adapt to the social norms of their new environment.</p> <p>Loneliness among out-of-town students is not merely an individual</p>

	<p>experience but is also influenced by external social and cultural factors. One of the primary causes is the emotional distance from family. Families serve as a primary source of emotional and psychological support, and their absence often intensifies feelings of loneliness. Students must fill this gap by building stronger social relationships on campus, though this process is not always easy.</p> <p>Additionally, a lack of activities or routines can worsen feelings of loneliness. Empty free time without productive engagement can lead to a deeper sense of isolation. Some students also struggle to form meaningful social connections, even in a crowded environment. This is often due to cultural or social value differences, making it harder for them to adapt to their new surroundings.</p>
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Impact of Loneliness on Students



- Reduced concentration, motivation in living daily
- Bad moods such as : prolonged sadness, easily disappointed, feeling empty, unstable emotions
- Physical condition that is easily sick
- Suicidal thoughts
- None, I still enjoy and am happy even though I am lonely because I adapt easily

Based on the data, the effects of loneliness on out-of-town students at FIKT Universitas Pelita Bangsa include:

Decreased Concentration and Motivation (12.5%)

A small percentage of students experience reduced concentration and motivation in their daily activities. This suggests that loneliness can impact their productivity and focus.

Poor Mood (37.5%)

Many students experience prolonged sadness, frequent disappointment, feelings of emptiness, and unstable emotions. This significant impact highlights that loneliness can disrupt students' emotional stability.

No Impact (50%)

Interestingly, the majority of students (50%) reported that they do not experience any negative effects from loneliness. This is due to their ability to adapt easily, allowing them to still feel content and happy despite feeling lonely.

The data above show that the effects of loneliness on out-of-town students at FIKT Universitas Pelita Bangsa vary depending on individual coping abilities. While 12.5% of students experience decreased motivation and concentration, 37.5% face negative emotional impacts such as prolonged sadness and emotional instability. However, the majority (50%) successfully cope with loneliness, demonstrating high adaptability and resilience. This underscores the importance of coping strategies and social support in mitigating the negative effects of loneliness among out-of-town students.

Coping Strategies Used by Out-of-Town Students to Overcome Loneliness



The study revealed that out-of-town students at FIKT Universitas Pelita Bangsa use various coping strategies to deal with loneliness.

The data show the following trends:

Focusing on Academics and/or Work as a Form of Self-Management (45.5%)

Most students choose to concentrate on academics or work as a way to manage their time and thoughts. Engaging in these activities helps them feel more productive and reduces the time available to dwell on loneliness.

Socializing with University Friends (27.3%)

Some students overcome loneliness by expanding their social circles on campus. Interacting with peers helps them feel more connected and supported.

Adapting to the Environment (18.2%)

Students also strive to adjust to their new surroundings. This adaptation process includes learning about local culture, understanding new habits, and establishing routines that help them feel comfortable.

Joining Student Organizations such as HIMA and BEM (9.1%)

Some students actively participate in campus organizations to fill their free time while also building relationships with like-minded individuals. Their involvement gives them a sense of belonging and reduces feelings of isolation.

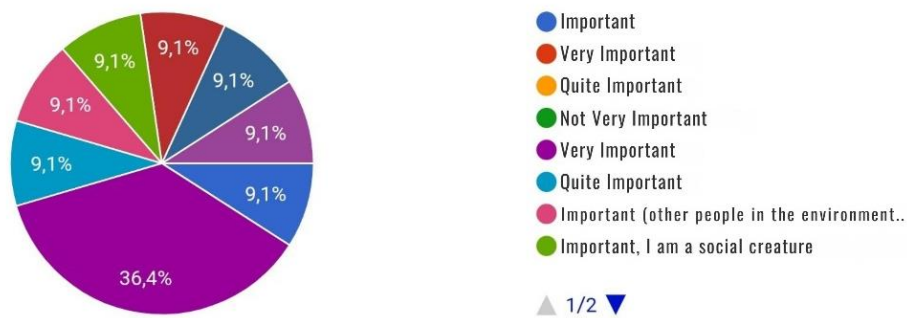
Other Less Dominant Strategies

Options such as seeking romantic relationships or utilizing university counseling services are not the primary choices but are still recognized as alternatives by some students.

The coping strategies employed by out-of-town students demonstrate that they tend to seek approaches that enhance productivity while also expanding their social connections. Focusing on academics or work is the most common choice, reflecting their need to maintain personal stability through time management and academic achievements. On the other hand, socializing with university friends is also an important approach, as it helps students establish support networks in their new environment.

Moreover, the effort to adapt to a new environment highlights students' ability to navigate cultural differences or new living conditions. Some students choose to join campus organizations such as HIMA or BEM to stay engaged while forming new relationships. Nonetheless, alternative strategies like counseling services or romantic relationships remain relevant for those who seek additional emotional support to cope with loneliness.

The Role of Friends and Environment in Overcoming Loneliness



According to the questionnaire and interview findings, students' views on the role of friends and social environments in combating loneliness are categorized as follows:

Very Important : Many students feel that emotional support from friends is crucial in overcoming loneliness.

Important : The presence of friends on campus helps students feel more connected.

Moderately Important : Some students feel somewhat helped by close friendships, although these do not completely eliminate loneliness.

Not Very Important : A small number of students prefer to cope with loneliness on their own without relying heavily on social interactions.

The majority of students recognize that friends and social environments play a significant role in overcoming loneliness. Strong social support helps them feel more accepted and valued. The presence of friends serves as a primary resource for alleviating emotional distress. Additionally, an inclusive and supportive campus community fosters stronger social bonds among students, creating a sense of belonging that reduces loneliness.

However, not all students have the same social needs. Some prefer to handle loneliness independently finding comfort in solitude or engaging in personal activities. This variation highlights that individuals have different approaches to coping with loneliness, and their social needs differ accordingly

Conclusion

This study found that loneliness is a significant challenge frequently experienced by out-of-town students at FIKT Universitas Pelita Bangsa. Loneliness is triggered by several main factors, such as physical and emotional distance from family, lack of meaningful activities during free time, difficulty in forming deep social connections, and challenges in adapting to a new environment. These conditions place out-of-town students in a vulnerable emotional state.

The effects of loneliness are evident in various aspects of students' lives, including persistent low moods, decreased motivation and concentration in studies, and potential physical health issues. However, out-of-town students manage to cope with these challenges through various coping strategies, such as engaging in productive activities, strengthening social relationships, and developing a positive mindset. Additionally, social support from friends and campus communities plays a crucial role in helping them overcome feelings of loneliness.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of emotional and social support for out-of-town students to maintain their psychological well-being. Efforts such as improving counseling services, strengthening social communities, and providing campus orientation programs can help these students adapt better and reduce the risk of loneliness.

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