



Cognitive Dissonance and Resilience in Facing Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic that lasted for the past 1 year in Indonesia has become a phenomenon which caused many changes in social behavior. One of the social behavior changes is due to the cognitive dissonance experienced by the community as a form of psychological discomfort due to the government's inconsistency in handling the conditions of the outbreak. Resilience is a psychological resource that can help individuals reduce psychological discomfort and adapt for changes in facing the Covid-19 pandemic. This study aims to analyze whether there is a relationship between cognitive dissonance and community resilience related to the Covid-19 pandemic. This study uses a quantitative approach. Data were collected using a questionnaire, as a modification from the Wagnild & Young Resilience scale (1993), as well as the Cognitive Dissonance scale which was compiled by the author based on the aspects explained by Festinger (Sarwono 2006). The research subjects were 52 people who were obtained by sending a questionnaire via google form. Data analysis using product moment correlation. From the data analysis, the value of $r = 0.302$ with a p value of 0.030 ($p < 0.05$). The results of this study indicate that there is a relationship between cognitive dissonance and resilience. The results of this study also prove that the discomfort thinking due to cognitive dissonance is associated with high resilience.

Keywords: Cognitive dissonance, resilience, covid-19 pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 (Corona Virus Disease-19) is an infectious disease that attacks the respiratory system caused by a new type of corona virus discovered due to the outbreak in Wuhan, China in December 2019, after that Covid-19 outbreak escalate throughout the world and declared as a global pandemic by WHO on March 11, 2020 (politik.lipi.go.id. 2020) and has changed the world order within a short time.

The Covid-19 pandemic that has lasted for the past 1 year in Indonesia has become a phenomenon which caused many changes in social behavior, both positive and negative. One of the social behavior changes is due to the cognitive dissonance experienced by the community as a form of psychological discomfort due to various kinds of news about Covid-19 and the government's inconsistency in handling the conditions of the outbreak.

Covid-19 coverage from various mass media tends to generate cognitive dissonance in individuals who access actual information. Mowen and Minor (2002: 375) state that cognitive dissonance is an unpleasant emotional condition. This situation is experienced by individuals when there are logical inconsistencies in cognitive elements.

The government's inconsistency in handling the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic has also contributed to cognitive dissonance in community, including the implementation of the PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions) by the government which is not simultaneous, fast and firm throughout Indonesia after the issuance of Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020 dated 31 March 2020, for example :

- a. The implementation of the PSBB in DKI Jakarta Province began after the issuance of the DKI Jakarta Governor Regulation No. 33 of 2020 dated 9 April 2020;
- b. The implementation of the PSBB in West Java Province began after the issuance of the West Java Governor Regulation No. 30 of 2020 dated 18 April 2020;
- c. The implementation of the PSBB in East Java Province began after the issuance of the East Java Governor Regulation No. 30 of 2020 dated 22 April 2020.

After the implementation of the PSBB, it was continued with the New Normal Provisions for the community which were regulated through the Indonesian Minister of Health Decree No. HK.01.07 / MenKes / 382/2020 dated 19 June 2020 concerning Public Health Protocols in Public Places and Facilities in the Context of Prevention and Control of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19), with a potential risk causing new clusters for the spread of Covid-19 as has been reported in various mass media, and at the end several regional governments re-enacted the PSBB such as DKI Jakarta Province as of September 14, 2020. This has created many changes and life stress for the community generally.

When changes and life stress occur so intensely and fast, an individual needs to develop his abilities in such a way and be able to pass it all effectively. In order to maintain the life continuity optimally, the need for capability to be resilient becomes higher. Resilience is an important factor for the individual's ability to adapt with a variety of changes that create stress. Moreover, based on research and various literature, people with high resilience are able to escape from their problems promptly and not immersed with feelings of being a victim of the environment or circumstances.

Resilience becomes important for being researched because it is a psychological resource that can help individuals to reduce psychological discomfort and adapt themselves for changes in facing difficulties which emerged as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Masten states that resilience as an ordinary magic for individuals adapting within obstacles or stressors (Tepe & Lukey, 2008). Ungar, et al (2007) also explained that resilience is influenced by the results of the interaction between individuals with their environment and local cultural contexts such as values, beliefs, and individual's daily coping.

When cognitive dissonance becomes an individual element experiencing a cognitive discomfort process, this discomfort will certainly cause changes in the individual's psychological process, and in this case resilience becomes the study. The assumption is that people with cognitive dissonance will find a way to the process of consonance. The more often you experience dissonance, the more often you will get learning to get the consonance. This repetitive learning process ultimately results in an individual's resilience when faced with similar conditions. Finally, resilience in this study becomes a variable which is predicted to increase due to the learning process to achieve cognitive consonance.

Therefore it becomes an interesting study for researchers to do research related to the relationship between cognitive dissonance and community resilience in facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resilience

Reivich and Shatte (2002) explained that resilience is an individual's adapting ability to difficult situations, individuals can be said to have resilience when they are able to quickly recover to their pre-trauma conditions and appear immune from various negative life events that occur. Furthermore, resilient individuals are individuals who respond to every problem in a healthy and productive manner,



whose keeping themselves healthy and not hurting themselves and others, the main thing in this resilience ability is to manage stress well (Reivich & Shatte, 2002).

Individuals with resilience will be able to quickly recover to their pre-traumatic conditions, appear immune from negative life events, and are adaptable to extreme stress and adversity (Holaday, in Widuri 2012). Resilient individuals will be able to cope with life's difficulties and rebuild their lives, in this case, individuals transform their problems positively, and resilience will help them to overcome their difficulties (Winarsih in Ekasari, 2013). Resilience is a capacity for individuals to wake up from adversity and rise again from difficulty (Setyoso, 2013).

The ability to survive and rise from difficult situations in individuals is usually defined as resilience (Tugade & Fredrikson, 2016). Walsh (Lestari, 2016) explained that resilience is an individual's ability to rise from suffering, thus the mental will become stronger and will have more resources. Resilience is more than just the ability to survive, because resilience enables individuals to recover from painful wounds, as well as control and continue their lives with love and compassion (Lestari, 2016).

Based on several resilience theories and explanations above, it can be concluded that the essence of resilience is the individual's ability to rise, be strong and be able to manage themselves in facing life problems and furthermore they become better individuals. Individuals can be said to be resilient if they quickly recovered to the condition before a problem occurred and he/she is responding to the problems in a healthy manner.

Aspects of Resilience

Reivich and Shatte (2002) described seven abilities which build the resilience of individuals, as follows:

a. **Emotional Regulation**

Emotional regulation is the ability to remain calm under stressful conditions. The research found that individuals whose lack the ability to control emotions will have difficulty in building and maintaining relationships with other people. Reivich and Shatte (2002) revealed two skills for individuals to conduct emotional regulation easier which are calm and focus.

b. **Impulse Control**

Impulse control is the individual's ability to control their desires, urges, interests, and pressures that arise from themselves. Individuals who have low impulse control abilities will quickly experience emotional changes which resulted in difficulties to control their thoughts and behavior.

c. **Optimism**

Individuals with resilience ability are individuals who are optimistic, optimism is an individual's ability to see a brighter future. Optimism possessed by individuals indicates that the individual believes in his/her ability to overcome adversity. The combination of realistic optimism and self-efficacy is the key to resilience and success (Reivich & Shatte, 2002).

d. **Causal Analysis**

Causal analysis refers to an individual's ability to accurately identify the causes of the problems encountered. Individuals who are unable to properly identify the causes of their problems will continue to make the same mistakes.

e. **Empathy**

Empathy is closely related to the individual's ability to read other people's emotional and psychological conditions, the ability of empathy is being able to interpret the nonverbal languages shown and being able to capture what other people think and feel. Individuals with low empathy tend to repeat the pattern made by non-resilient individuals, which generalize all the desires and emotions of others (Reivich & Shatte, 2002).

f. **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is the result of successful problem solving. Self-efficacy represents a belief that individuals are able to solve problems experienced and achieve success. Self-efficacy is very important to achieve resilience.

g. **Reaching out**

Individuals who are able to reach out are individuals who do not avoid failure, but who dare to face it. Individuals who reach out not only lead standard lives but, dare to accept life's failures and humiliation from others in order to achieve their success.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance described as a condition that is confusing, which occurs when the individual "finds himself doing something which is not appropriate with what is known, or having opinions that are not appropriate with other believed opinions". In other words, cognitive dissonance is associated with two kinds of certain behavior inconsistencies, caused by inappropriate behavior with attitude, and occurs as a result of decisions made. (Festinger, 1957: 3; Sears, et.al, 1985: 156-157; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005: 77; Griffin, 2006: 228,237; Tankard and Werner, 2008: 165; Perloff, 2010: 238; in Hutagalung, 2016: 73).

Festinger (1957) explained that cognitive dissonance is discrepancy or the gap that occurs between two inconsistent cognitive elements, and creates psychological discomfort. This explanation is supported by Vaughan & Hogg 17 (2005) which states that cognitive dissonance is a condition that is uncomfortable, inconsistent or inappropriate with each other generated by psychological stress when a person has several different cognitions.

Based on several expert's opinions, it can be concluded that cognitive dissonance is the presence of two or more relevant cognitions (knowledge) but inconsistent with each other, thus the gap creates discomfort in a person. As a result of this discomfort, individuals will experience hesitancy in decision making.

Aspects of Cognitive Dissonance

Festinger (1957) mentions two common situations that cause the emergence of dissonance, which are (1) when a new event or information occurs, (2) when an opinion or decision has to be made. When the cognition of the action taken is different with opinions or knowledge that lead to other action.

Furthermore, Festinger (in Sarwono, 2006) states that there are several aspects of cognitive dissonance, which are logical inconsistencies, cultural values, public opinion and past experiences. **Logical inconsistency** is the aspect of cognitive dissonance related to difference in beliefs on each individual cognitive patterns which cause irregularities. **Cultural values** are cognitive dissonance aspects related to the values that each individual has that influence their cognitive. **Public opinion** is an aspect that explains the public opinions in the individual's environment are able to influence his/her cognitive. **Past experience** is the aspect which explains that the experience of the individual either directly experienced the specific event or indirectly by looking at others' experiences, can affect cognitive.

Hutagalung (2016) agrees that there are two other sources to complement the source of the cause of cognitive dissonance came from the theory developed by Sheriff, et al, which are:



1. **Internal reference.**

Internal references or reference points always exist in individuals and affect how people respond to signs or information. Every individual will have a reference point, for example an internal reference in an individual is the existence of family norms.

2. **Ego involvement.**

Ego involvement is the level of individual relevance to a certain issue or problem. There are pros and cons for being tolerated or not, or an acceptance and rejection, will be influenced by an ego involvement.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach. The independent variable in this study is cognitive dissonance, while the dependent variable is resilience. Cognitive dissonance in this study is a condition that is uncomfortable, inconsistent or inappropriate with each other generated by psychological stress when a person has several different cognitions (Festinger 1957). Resilience in this study is defined as the ability to rise from adversity, adapt well in various problems, endure difficulties, and improve yourself so as to have more intelligence and strength. Resilient individuals can soar and develop social and academic competency, although under extreme stress (Wolin & Wolin, 1993).

The population in this study are Indonesian citizens who experienced various stresses due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Samples were taken using google form which were distributed to several Whatsapp groups so as the affordability was limited. The number of subjects of this study was 52 respondents.

The sampling technique in this study was using *nonprobability sampling technique*, which is incidental sampling. According to Sugiyono (2017: 67), incidental sampling is a sampling technique based on chance, that is, anyone who accidentally / incidentally meets the researcher can be used as a sample, as long as the person is considered suitable as a data source.

This study uses two scales, which are the cognitive dissonance scale and the resilience scale. Both scales are made with a Likert model which is measured through a continuum of 1 to 4. On each scale there are 4 alternative answers, namely SS (Strongly Agree), S (Agree), TS (Disagree), and STS (Strongly Disagree). Resilience is measured using the *Wagnild & Young's* resilience scale, which consisted of 25 items. Whereas the cognitive dissonance scale was compiled by the researcher based on the aspects proposed by Festinger (Sarwono 2006), which consisted of 16 items.

Data analysis used product moment correlation analysis with Pearson Correlation technique, which in the calculation process was assisted by using the SPSS 21 program. Acceptance and rejection of hypothesis were determined based on p less than 0.5.

RESULTS

Participants involved in this study were 52 participants, divided into several classifications as of male participants 59.62% and female participants 40.38%; age range under 20 years 3.85%, age range 20-29 years 19.23%, age range 30-39 years 55.77%, age range 40-49 years 15.38%, and age range over 50 years 5.77%; region of origin in Jakarta 1.92%, West Java province 1.92%, Central Java province 3.85%, East Java province 76.92%, South Kalimantan province 1,92%, and the province of West Papua 13.46%. The characteristics of these research participants as seen on Table 1.

Table 1. Description of Respondents

a. Gender

| Gender | Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Male | 31 | 59.62% |
| Female | 21 | 40.38% |
| Total | 52 | 100.00% |

b. Age

| Range of | Respondents | Percentage |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| 10 - 19 years | 2 | 3.85% |
| 20 - 29 years | 10 | 19.23 % |
| 30 - 39 years | 29 | 55.77% |
| 40 - 49 years | 8 | 15.38% |
| > 50 years | 3 | 5.77% |
| Total | 52 | 100.00% |

c. Region of Origin

| Province | Respondents | Percentage |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|
| DKI Jakarta | 1 | 1.92% |
| West Java | 1 | 1.92% |
| Central Java | 2 | 3.85% |
| East Java | 40 | 76.92% |
| South Kalimantan | 1 | 1.92% |
| West Papua | 7 | 13.46% |
| Total | 52 | 100.00% |

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

| Descriptive Statistics | | | | | | |
|------------------------|----|-------|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| | N | Range | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| VAR_X | 52 | 31 | 69 | 100 | 84.81 | 8.303 |
| VAR_Y | 52 | 29 | 24 | 53 | 37.00 | 6.759 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 52 | | | | | |

The X variable in Table 2 describes the level of cognitive dissonance experienced by the research participants. The results of the measurement from 52 respondents illustrate that the range value



of 31 is obtained from the lowest range value of 69 and the highest value of 100. While the mean value is 84.81 and the standard deviation value is 8.303.

Meanwhile, the Y variable which is the resilience variable shows that the range value is 29, from the lowest value of 24 and the highest value of 53. The mean value is 37 with a standard deviation value of 6.759.

Based on the description of the two variables, it defines that both of them have a similar range value and also with a small value difference in standard deviation, so that the two variables have similar shapes. This statement is proved by the results of the assumption test in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Assumptions Test

The researcher tested the assumptions before testing the hypothesis, as conducting the normality test and linearity test. The results of these two tests qualify for the product moment correlation hypothesis test.

a. Resilience Variable Normality Test

| Variable | Shapiro-Wilk | | | |
|------------|--------------|----|-------|-------------|
| | Statistics | df | Sig. | Information |
| Resilience | 0.970 | 52 | 0.214 | Normal |

The results of the distribution normality test for the resilience variable using Shapiro-Wilk obtained significance value at $p = 0.214 > 0.05$. This means that the data distribution is normally distributed.

b. Cognitive Dissonance Normality Test

| Variable | Shapiro-Wilk | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|----|-------|-------------|
| | Statistics | df | Sig. | Information |
| Cognitive Dissonance | 0.966 | 52 | 0.141 | Normal |

The results of the distribution normality test for the cognitive dissonance variable obtained significance value at $p = 0,141 > 0.05$. This means that the data distribution of cognitive dissonance variable is also normally distributed.

c. Linearity Test

| Variable | F | Sig. | Information |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Cognitive Dissonance - Resilience | 1.166 | 0.345 | Linear |

The results of the linearity test for the relationship between the Cognitive Dissonance and Resilience variables obtained a significance value of 0.345 ($p > 0.05$). This means that there is a linear relationship between Cognitive Dissonance with Resilience variable.

Table 4. Hypothesis Test

| Variable | N | Rxy | Sig. |
|---------------------------------|----|-------|-------|
| Cognitive Dissonance-Resilience | 52 | 0.302 | 0.030 |

Based on the analysis using the *product moment* correlation test, a score was obtained ($r_{xy} = 0.302, p = 0.030$). Therefore $p < 0.05$, the results of the analysis are significant. The conclusion is that there is a significant positive correlation between cognitive dissonance and community resilience associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus the hypothesis proposed in this study can be accepted. By accepting this hypothesis, it can be explained that people who experience cognitive dissonance will be related to their level of resilience.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study prove that the discomfort thinking due to cognitive dissonance is correlated with the resilience height. This means that the higher the cognitive dissonance experienced, the higher the level of a person's resilience in facing the Covid-19 pandemic. Conversely, the lower the cognitive dissonance experienced, the lower the level of a person's resilience in facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

This is also in line with previous research conducted by Shella Anggarini (2020) in a journal entitled "*Phenomena in Covid-19 News*" which states that news about Covid-19 tends to generate cognitive dissonance and affective changes in individuals who access daily actual information from various mass media. Therefore, the rise of news about Covid-19 in media which are accessible by public, encouraged various reactions and responses from the community. Individual dissonance over various accessed informations resulting a cognitive impairment.

In previous research, the writer quoted from the thesis entitled "*Wife's Decision to Survive in Domestic Violence*" from Chusnul Mas Nur Aini, IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya 2006, her research explained that Leon Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory (1957) had an influence on various situations in daily life. The impact of this theory can be seen in the following :

1. Decision-making: decisions are made based on a conflict situation.
2. Coercion to experience: in public situations (in the midst of many people), a person can be forced to do something (threatening punishment or promising a reward). If the action is not inappropriate with the will (as an individual), then there will be dissonance. The degree of this dissonance depends on the amount of punishment or reward being received.
3. Exposure to information. The dissonance will encourage the search for new information.
4. Social support. If an individual knows that his opinion is different from other people, then a lack of social support will arise.

This is in line with this research, that the cognitive dissonance theory explained by Festinger (1957) has influence on various situations in Indonesian people's daily life in facing the Covid-19 pandemic. The theoretical impact seen in terms of community decisions to behave healthily and survive in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic is based on a conflict situation. The impact is also seen in terms of the compulsion experienced by the community to obey applying health methods as recommended by the government. Furthermore, exposure to new information from various media and social support to increase resilience in facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

Resilience is the individual's ability to adapt positively to achieve better results when faced with something difficult (Santrock 2015). Individuals who have the ability to resilience will manage



themselves effectively to adapt and rise from difficult situations. Resilient individuals can soar and develop social and academic competency, even under extreme stress (Wolin & Walin, 1993).

Individuals with resilience will be able to quickly recover to their pre-traumatic conditions, appear immune from negative life events, and are adaptable to extreme stress and adversity (Holaday, in Widuri 2012). Resilient individuals will be able to cope with life's difficulties and rebuild their lives, in this case, individuals transform their problems positively, and resilience will help them to overcome their difficulties (Winarsih in Ekasari, 2013). Resilience is a capacity for individuals to wake up from adversity and rise again from difficulty (Setyoso, 2013).

Based on this description, it can be concluded that resilience is an individual's ability to adapt, adjust to the life stress or trauma that immediately bounces back and recover from the traumatic event experienced.

CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between cognitive dissonance towards information about the Covid-19 pandemic and an individual's resilience. From this conclusion, high cognitive dissonance can increase an individual's resilience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion has indeed shown a positive correlation between levels of cognitive dissonance and resilience, however, further research is needed. Recommendation for further researchers is (1) the need to increase the number of subjects, in order to gain more varied subject's characteristics (2) does not use google form within data collection, in order to avoid "faking good" on questionnaires fulfillment. (3) add more research variables, in order to become a more comprehensive theoretical model. Suggestions for the community, there is a positive side of cognitive dissonance. However, this cognitive dissonance should not disrupt the psychological well-being any further.

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