



The Dynamics Of Resilience In Adolescent Victims Of Bullying

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ABSTRACT

School bullying has rapidly spread which results in a significant community health issue, in which the major perpetrators are adolescents. Bullying can be defined as negative act be it physical or verbal with a malice intent and is performed repeatedly involving power differential between parties involved. Several research on resilience showed that student resiliency is essential to manage bullying and reduce the long-term impact. The aim of this study is to explore the resiliency dynamic of students who are victims of bullying. The research adopts case studies with qualitative methods. Two participants who are victims of bullying are the subjects of this study. The results indicate that the participants experience a process of resiliency, starting from the embarrassment and guilt, fear of rejection, self-adjustment, and then standing up again. Resources that helped respondents reach resiliency was self-competence (mastery), connectedness with parents and peers (relatedness), and school and government rules. The research found that there are internal and external factors contributing to the resiliency dynamic of victims of bullying.

Keywords: Adolescent; Resilience; Victims

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescent development stage is known for its storm and stress, characterized by sudden heightened emotions and unpredictable emotions due to adolescent hormonal changes as well as the environmental expectations (Santrock, 2014). This rapid development often influences adolescents' decision making. Adolescents often find it difficult to be in control of their behavior and emotion thus causing frequent risky and rash behavior (Dahl, 2004). One of the riskiest behaviors they often engaged in is bullying. School bullying is spreading rapidly and turning into a significant mental health issue in adolescents (Bradshaw et al., 2015; Nansel et al., 2001). Bullying needs to draw the attention of the community with the rising of bullying victims year to year. As stated by *Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia* (KPAI; Child Protection Commission Indonesia), over a 9-year period, between 2011 and 2019, there were 37,381 reported cases of violence against children, of it 2,473 are cases of bullying (KPAI, 2020). This data shows that the number of bullying victims is relatively high.

Bullying can be defined as negative act be it physical or verbal with a malice intent, victims (Pepler et al., 2001). Bullying is an aggressive behavior that is performed repeatedly in the form of physical, verbal, social, and virtual where there is a power differential status (Bradshaw et al., 2015). Physical bullying includes hitting, pushing, or other physically harming act. Verbal bullying includes insulting one's name or nickname, talking profanities aimed to downgrade the victim. Social bullying includes creating issues/rumors, gossip, and social persecution that affects the interpersonal relation and social status of the victim. Virtual bullying typically consist of threats, insults, harassment via phone, chat, social media, and other electronic devices (Bradshaw et al., 2015).

Each bullying causes significant impact towards the psychological condition of the victim. Those impact results in lack of motivation and self-esteem, lack of confidence, depression, suicidal intent that may end in death (Jelita et al., 2021). Bullying has also been shown to negatively effect the victim's physical health, emotional health, and behavior that will eventually impact the victim's wellbeing (Shemesh & Heiman, 2021). The effects of consequences of bullying cause victims to fall deeper, making resiliency a crucial trait for victims to possess for them to recover and re-adapt positively from their trauma (Rasmussen et al., 2018; Shemesh & Heiman, 2021).

Resilience is referred as a personal quality that enables individuals to grow despite challenges and an effective and adaptive strategy in facing loss, suffering, and difficulties (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Singh & Yu, 2010). Resilience consists of three protective factors, which are mastery, relatedness, and emotional reactivity (Moore & Woodcock, 2017). Mastery relates to the chances of individuals to interact with their environment from their internal ability, such as optimism, self-efficacy, and self-adaptation. Relatedness is the capacity of individuals as social beings comprised of building relations with others, social support, social safety, and tolerance. Emotional reactivity is the point of threshold condition of individuals when faced with difficult situations, which comprised of emotional reaction (sensitivity), the extent of recovery (recovery), and the degree of impact felt by the individual (impairment) (Moore & Woodcock, 2017).

Previous studies discussed the resilience of adolescents who were victims of domestic violence showed that adolescent resilience development is not a short process. There are 3 phases of the process, which are the decline phase, adjustment phase, and development phase (Maslahah & Khoirunnisa, 2020). The decline stage is marked by the individual's inability to fight against the challenging situation they are facing followed by a stage whereby they try to accept and be patient. In the last phase, the individual gains confidence to take a step of action and improve their life better by searching new environment and live independently. The process of resilience is formed by "I Have" that comes from the support of the closest people, I Am is the high level of self-confidence to recover from their deterioration, and I Can is the effort to become financially independent (Maslahah & Khoirunnisa, 2020).

In relation to the above, this study attempts to examine the process of resiliency of victims of bullying and the sources that plays a part in improving their resiliency. This study would contribute to the expansion of psychological knowledge, particularly clinical psychology, mental health, and positive psychology. This study could offer benefits to victims of bullying of information on how to optimize their sources of resiliency to recover from their bullying experience.

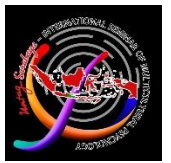
METHOD

Research Design

This research is a qualitative research case studies, which is an approach used to examine the social phenomenon that implements in-depth analysis on an individual case (Creswel, 2014). This study attempts to further analyze the process and sources of resilience of bullying victims. This study also uses interpretive paradigm, which emphasizes the subjective understanding of a phenomenon that attempts to explain social events based on the perspective and experience of the research subjects (Mujtahidin & Oktianto, 2022). The focus of this study is the experience and imposed meaning of subjects in regards to bullying instances, therefore, case study approach in interpretive paradigm enable the researcher to explore the results deeper and in detail.

Participants

The characteristics of participants in this study are adolescents between the age of 12 to 21



years old, according to Indonesia's age reference of adolescents of 10 to 21 years old (Soeroso, 2001) who had been a victim of bullying. This study uses purposive sampling, a method used to identify, select, and take samples based on a predetermined criterion. The number of samples in this study is 2 participants.

Instrument

The data collection was performed using focused interview.

Research Procedure

The data collection will begin with making an interview guide so that the questions are focused and relevant to the research topic. The next step is to make an appointment for an interview with two respondents. The first and second respondents were interviewed online by zoom media. After the data has been collected, the next process is to code the data for the thematic analysis and data interpretation.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data is analyzed using content analysis with the following steps: data categorization, data coding, and data interpretation.

RESULT

The two participants in this study were adolescents who had been victims of bullying at junior school and/or high school levels. In this study, both participants experienced the same process to become resilient from their traumatic events.

First Participant

The first participant could only surrender and felt that he was the target of bullying because it was indeed his fault to defend his friend who was the victim of the bullying first. The experience of bullying caused the first participant to feel scared and cry because he could not stand from his traumatic event of bullying. Repeated experience of bullying in the end would make him feel worry, anxious, and fearful, which typically causes him to avoid and distract by doing other activities to push away the fear and worry. He wrote down every thought and feeling that arose every time he experienced bullying to relieve stress.

He has advantages in the academic field and is close to teachers so that this potential is optimized for him to rise from his slump and through this potential too, his friends gradually begin to approach him. He told his parents about the condition of the bullying that he was experiencing, but the father's response intimidated him by commenting that boy shouldn't whine, he must be brave enough to repay the bad actions of his friends. He also did the same thing by telling teachers at his school about the bullying he was experiencing. However, the teacher's response was ignorant and thought that the actions of his friends were just joking. In the end, he prefers to keep his traumatic experiences and tries to focus on maximizing his potential in the academic field.

Second Participant

The second participant became the target of bullying because he was ashamed of his bad physical condition so that he considered himself different from the others and became the subject of ridicule from his friends. The experience of bullying made him prefer to be alone and keep his

distance from his friends at school. Repeated experience of bullying in the end would make him feel worry, anxious, and fearful, which typically causes him to avoid and distract by doing other activities to push away the fear and worry. He prefers to spend time listening to music or reading comics. He didn't tell his parents about his traumatic experience because he didn't want to make his parent feel worry. However, he did not give up and tried to improve himself. He started looking for ways to improve his physique so that he could start to adjust and gain confidence again. He was able to improve his physical condition so that when his physical body was considered good, his self-confidence gradually grew because physical appearance could affect his mentality. He began to learn about fashion and can improve his appearance and started taking care of himself so that his face looked more attractive. From here, he began to get the attention of his friends and was no longer a victim of bullying

He feels that it will be difficult to get out of his bullying experience if he doesn't rely on himself. Thus, he feels that other friends only become bystanders if other friends are bullied because they are more looking for a sense of security. School policies, including teachers, are also not strict in following up on cases of bullying in schools because acts of bullying are only seen as a joke. In the end, he could only focus on cultivating his potential

DISCUSSION

Process of resilience

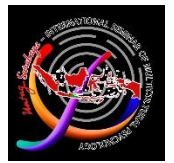
The experience of bullying faced by two participants forced them to journey the various phases of process of resilience.

Shame and Guilt

This stage is called shame and guilt because participants often blame themselves and felt that they are the source of the cause of bullying they experience. When bullying is experienced repeatedly, participants typically feel helpless and view the experience because of something they did, such as different physical feature (being short, having pimples, being bald, and others), that becomes the topic of bullying of others who are has more power/dominant. The feeling of embarrassment falls in the self-conscious emotions that originates from an evaluation process and self-reflection (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). In adolescent development stage, they can consciously perform self-evaluation where the subject are themselves with the focus on the cause of bullying being some of their characteristics that are bullying targets (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007).

Fear

The experience of bullying caused the first participant feel scared and cry because he could not stand from his traumatic event of bullying. The same thing was experienced by the second participant who choose not to respond to the bullying he received because basically there was a fear of rejection that he felt. The second phased experienced by participants are to reexperience bullying. Repeated experience of bullying in the end would make victims feel worry, anxious, and fearful, which typically cause them to avoid and distract by doing other activities to push away the fear and worry. Fear can cause individuals become more fragile toward rejection and harassment therefore individuals would avoid or distract themselves with other activities (Vorauer et al., 2003). As such, victims choose to leave the environment, keep a distance, or choose a different activity that will calm themselves. The acceptance of rejection is a condition that is as equally important in an individual's life because these two conditions can bolster emotional and psychological state of an individual. When individuals experience rejection, they more often experience negative feelings, thus, lowering their



self-esteem, avoiding situations or interactions with others (Nafees & Jahan, 2018).

Adjustment

Both participants were both able to adapt to the bullying conditions they got and they even had diversionary activities when they were feeling stressed or under pressure. The third phase is self-adaptation. Participants try to engaging in distracting activities when they feel pressure due to bullying or try to find ways to improve themselves, including achieving higher grades or physical appearance. Self-adaptation fundamentally is the effort to actively cope with stress and pressure that rises from issues to achieve better wellbeing (Hidayati & Farid, 2016). This study found that participants successfully manage and handle challenges and frustrations with active coping against arising negative feelings. In line with this study, Hidayati and Farid (2016) state that adolescents who are able to control their responses in different conflicts, difficulties, and frustration efficiently live their life better.

Bounce Back

Resilience is also identical to the ability of bouncing back from the decline individual experience (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Victims who are resilient is characterized with by the awareness of knowing their potential as well as growing their potential positively; have the strong desire to rise up from the decline with hope of growth; and having the support of family, friends, peers, and environment. According to Greeff and Van den Berg (2013), resilience is a protective factor in an individual or community that enables individuals to positively respond to challenges and reach self-actualization. In both participants they possess this protective factors internally and it optimizes their academic ability, improve physical appearance, and the encouragement to learn about fashion, social support, and the acceptance from their community, such as parents and peers.

Source of Resilience

Resilience does not only concern personal qualities but also environmental factor (Moore & Woodcock, 2017). Based on this statement, internal source of resilience is not the only source but also external factors. In this research, there are a few main sources that shape participant's resilience.

Mastery

Mastery refers to the chance of individuals interacting with their environment that is driven by internal ability, such as optimism, self-efficacy, and self-adaptation (Moore & Woodcock, 2017). Master also enables both respondents to find coping strategies for managing stress that rise from bullying. With the availability of mastery, individuals are able to be more resilient because they have the coping strategies (Greeff & Van den Berg, 2013). In this study, it is found that adolescents successfully cope when they feel pressured because they have effective coping strategies. Those coping strategies includes, reading books, listening to music, journaling about their emotional state and feels, and studying. This mastery aspect is also related with self-competency from resilience that refers to strength, potential, and commitment one has toward their life goal, hence, when experiencing challenges, they do not back away from their life goals (Connor & Davison, 2003; Singh & Yu, 2010). This research found that participants who have clear and specific life goals, for instance, graduating school and staying committed to self-growth and maximizing their potential.

Relatedness

Relatedness is an individual's confidence in building relationship with others, social support, comfort in their social circle, and tolerance behavior (Moore & Woodcock, 2017). Relatedness is also known as connectedness. Connectedness is a significant factor in developing resilience (Rasmussen et al., 2018). Connectedness could come from two things; familial/parental connectedness to parents and friendship connectedness. Parental connectedness gives hope to the children through social interactions with others to understand other's feelings and needs. This study found that parental connectedness improves self-worth and life satisfaction as well as lowers depression, anxiety, and feelings of neglect (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Parental connectedness provides the feeling of security, worthy of love, and attention to the children (Engels, 2001). The connectedness bolsters the opportunity for individuals to interpret other's needs and feelings, which is comprised of communication and trust aspect (Engels, 2001). The study found that participants who has stronger connectedness are more likely to have higher resiliency because they have the support to exit challenging situations.

Positive connectedness between parents and child could mediate the children's adaptive ability following bullying experience whereby the child can face bullying consequences (Bowes et al. 2010). This study also shows that parents provide the chance for children to learn and manage their negative emotions that arises from those challenges (Valiente et al., 2004). Parent's responses could influence the child's capacity to regulate emotions in pressured situation (Duchesne et al., 2009). Children of parents who are close to their children and provides safety grows more confident and cared for (Engelset al., 2001). Furthermore, connectedness also increases self-worth and life satisfaction and reduces depression, anxiety, and feeling of neglect (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Jenkins (2016) study found that there is a positive correlation between connectedness with parents and resilience. However, Vingerboets (2012) suggest the contrary whereby secure attachment showed negative correlation with resilience which indicate that the higher the connectedness, the lower the resilience.

Peer connectedness is manifested in the form of friendship with friends of similar age. Van Harmelen et al. (2017) suggest that peer friendship and family support positively affect resilience, where friendship is the stronger predictor compared to family. This result is supported by Graber et al. (2016) who argued that adolescents who has at least one person who can be a friend or best friend could increase resilience in adolescents. Peers are seen as people who can offer help, connectedness, reliable friendship, self-validation, and emotional security (Graber et al., 2016). This study found that the acceptance from peers is very important for adolescents in offering support and help during moments of bullying.

Regulations from School

Resilience does not only come from internal source but also external. According to Grotberg (2003), those external sources is termed as 'I Have', which encompass access to gain protection from danger. Individuals know the provision of safety is easily accessible when needed against danger. Both participants feel that school regulation is unsupportive for victims of bullying to report acts of bullying or when they experience bullying because the school often view them as mere joke, or the complete absence of bullying regulation in schools. The existing regulations at school regarding acts of bullying are actually important to be strictly enforced and not just a formality. The school needs to carry out stricter supervision and not underestimate the behavior of physical fights carried out by students at school.

In general, the findings of this study are two participants who are victims of bullying experienced a range of phases of the resilience process, such as the shame and guilt, fear, adjustment, and bounce



back phase from unpleasant bullying experience. Sources that could strengthen resilience in two participants who are victims of bullying come from internal factors and external factors. Internal factors consist of mastery, which is active coping and personal competence that can be developed. External factors are relatedness which is divided to connection with parents and peers. Besides that, another external factor is stricschool regulation. The suggesstion for adolescents who experience bullying is to have maximum protective factors internally or externally to help grow their resilience. Furthermore, the suggestion for parents and significant others who have adolescents experiencing bullying is to improve the connectedness and closeness to the child in order to reduce loneliness during the period of bullying and resilience.

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