
Building Resilience through Counseling in The New Normal

Membangun Ketahanan Melalui Konseling di Era New Normal

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the dynamic process a 26 years old woman is going through in building her resiliency. The woman used to be verbally and emotionally abused by her stepmother, and that experience brings a significant impact on her life. This article's primary purpose is to describe how the woman's dynamic faces the problems and how she uses the counseling process, e-counseling, and face-to-face support to transform herself into a resilient and forgiving person. It also takes into account the woman's risk factors and protective factors. This is a case study, and the data was collected from a single case using in-depth interviews, observation, and psychological assessment. The data analysis is using thematic analysis. The result showed that the counseling process has helped the woman grow, raising her ability to cope with her problems, helped her to become more resilient, and become more forgiving and release some of her burdens.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Resilience is defined as an individual's response to adversity, such as stressful situations, continuous stress (Masten & Coastworth, 1998 in Perkins, 2003). Masten, known as the founder of Resilient Therapy, said that resilience does not work like a miracle or comes from a rare condition of a person. Still, resilience comes from the practice that a person builds through everyday life, common human resources in their minds, and children. -their children, their families, and their relationships.

The resiliency concept had a difficult time developing and expand from an individual level to a family level. Until now, there is still a tendency to view community resilience as the community promoting the families and individuals it comprises. Hawley & De Haan (1996); Walsh, 1996. In VanBreda, (2001) argues that family as a risk factor increases individual vulnerability. The family as a protective factor increases personal resilience and as an entity with its resilience factor. Counseling is defined as the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioral, or systemic intervention, strategies that address wellness, personal growth, or career development, as well as pathology. Counseling can help an individual facing mental health issues, developmental problems, and many more. Counseling can be done face to face, also by other means, such as e-counseling.

This research is a case study that tries to investigate how the woman's dynamics in facing the problems and how she uses the counseling process, e-counseling, and face-to-face, to transform herself into a resilient and forgiving person. This research also tried to consider the woman's risk factors and protective factors as an essential dimension.

2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

If we're trying to find the definition of resiliency, it would be quite problematic because it's widely varied. Some have seen resilience as a personal trait or attribute. And some have defined it as a continuous developmental process that reflects an ability to adapt to adverse circumstances (Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005 in Hidayati et al., 2011).

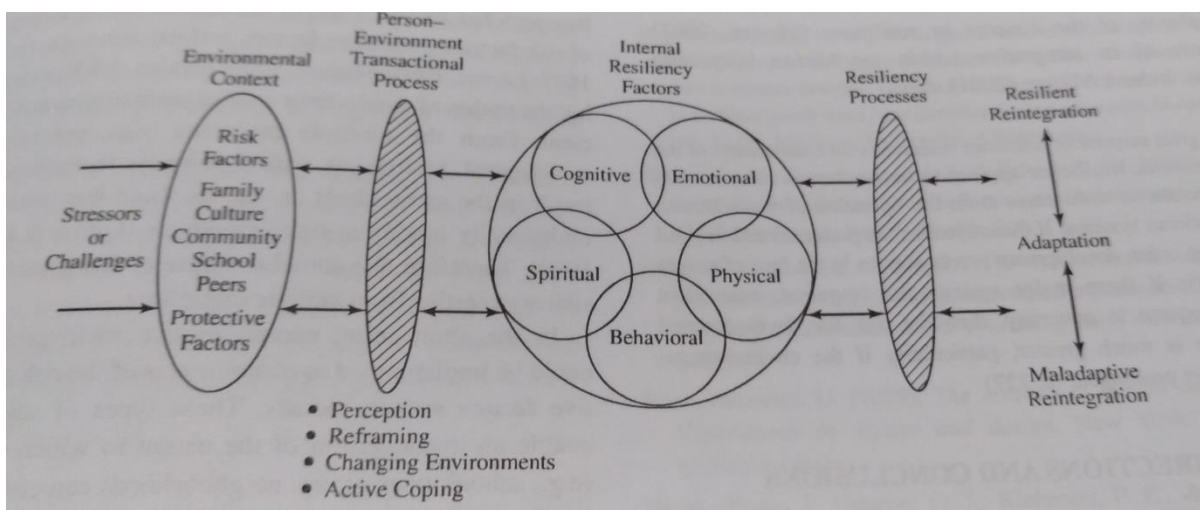
Brooks (2005, in Hidayati et al., 2011) had explained resilience more holistically. Brooks's definition of

resiliency includes the capacity of a person or an individual to deal well or effectively with stressful events and certain pressure. It also has how well that individual could coping with daily challenges. How good a person could rebound from failure, disappointments, wounds, mistakes, adversity, and trauma. So that the individual could develop a realistic, positive, and clear direction or goals, if someone could cope positively, they will be more able to solve problems effectively. They can also be having more comfortable interactions with other people. They will also be able to treat themselves with respect and dignity, develop the ability to be more confident, have clear life goals, be more responsible in life, more empathetic, more positive and hopeful, and be more open-minded and thoughtful. Alvord & Grados 2005, (in Hidayati et al., 2011) say that resilience is a specific process, capacity, or outcome of someone who has successfully adapted in the face of a challenging or threatening environment.

Resilient individuals adapt well despite severe stress in their lives (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2001, in Perkins, 2003). Resilient individuals can cope effectively with stressors due to their vulnerability and balance, conformity, or fit, among risks from stressful life events (Ford & Lerner, 1992; Kumpfer, 1999, in Perkins, 2003). Therefore, studying resilience involves examining the relationship between people and the demands of the context and the processes that will promote or reduce adaptability. Resiliency is also defined as a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes despite severe threats to adaptation or development (Masten, 2001, in Perkins, 2003). We then conclude resiliency as the human's ability to adapt well to his changing environment, including stressors.

People adapt, develop strengths to meet needs, grow and change, have varying strength levels, sometimes grow by struggling with adversity, and so on—underlie or are incorporated in many, more testable theories (e.g., Epstein, 1994; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984 in Lightsey, 2006). Many research provides evidence that specific variables and factors are involved in safeguarding and promoting successful development. Protective factors can be defined as variables linked with an individual experiencing positive developmental outcomes compared to adverse developmental outcomes (Lerner et al., 2003). The idea that protective factors can buffer stress and that positive thinking can have beneficial effects on depression has often been tested and, at times, been confirmed (e.g., Lightsey, 1994a, 1994b, 1997, 1999).

Masten, a developmental psychologist who has been working on resilience for many years, calls resilience “ordinary magic” (Masten, 2001, in Hart et al., 2007). Masten, known as the founder of resilient therapy, said that resilience doesn't have to come from a rare condition, a rare person, or an exceptional quality. It's come from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and their communities.”



Kumfer's Resilience Framework (1999 in Lerner, 2003)

Resilience and Family

There are three primary contexts in which families are considered (Hawley & De Haan, 1996; Walsh, 1996, in Van Breda, 2001):

1. The family can be playing the role of a risk factor. This kind of family increasing the vulnerability of a person.
2. The family can take the role of a protective factor. This kind of family will be increasing the resilience of individuals
3. The family can play as an entity itself with resilience factors of its own.

Resilience theory has historically considered the community a risk factor: poverty, crime, political instability, discrimination, and lack of community resources. As resilience theory has evolved, increasing attention has been given to the community as a source of protective factors: as a support system.

Sydney Cobb (1982, in Van Breda, 2001) identified four kinds of support systems:

1. Social support means a kind of support that involves the caring exchange of information, and this social support has three components: (1) Emotional support leading the recipient to believe that they are cared for

- and loved; (2) Esteem support leading the recipient to believe that they are esteemed and valued; and (3) Network support leading the recipient to believe that she has a defined position in a network of communication and mutual obligation.
2. Instrumental support. This kind of support, including counseling and psychotherapy, helps people cope better or adapt to promote their self-sufficiency.
 3. Active support. It provides total support, which, when given unnecessarily, may lead to dependency.
 4. Material support. It involves the provision of goods and services that assist the individual in achieving their objectives.

Counseling

There are many definitions of counseling. The purpose of counseling used in this research is from Gladding: An application of principles of human and psychological development, and the principle of mental health, through varied intervention and strategies (affective, behavioral, or systemic) that address wellness, personal growth, or career development, as well as pathology (Gladding, 2000).

One of the perspectives used in counseling is the strengths perspective. Assessing the client's strengths required specific assessment questions. Saleeby (1997, in Van Breda, 2001) highlights five kinds of questions:

1. Survival questions, for example: How have you managed to survive thus far? What had you had in mind as you faced these difficulties? What have you learned about yourself from your problems and failures?
2. Support questions, such as: During these challenging times, who have given you exceptional understanding, who has the support you, and who had guided you?
3. Exception questions, for example: What moments or incidents in your life have given you exceptional understanding, resilience, and guidance?
4. Possibility question, for example: What do you want from your life? What is your aspiration? How can we do, hand in hand, to help you achieve your goals? How can we work together to recover those special abilities? How can we reach back to those exemplary achievements you have had in the past?
5. Esteem questions, for example: Could you repeat what those good things people said about you are? Could you say something that people found you good at or make them like you?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A case study (Given, 2008) is an approach of research in which only a few subjects or few instances of the particular phenomenon are studied. And the researcher doing the study.

In Gladding (2000), Leedy said that a case study is an approach used to understand one unit, or one/ few persons, a group, or a program, intensively and systematically, and for a long time. It can be said that a case study method can be used to examine almost any phenomenon. In this research, a case study is used to investigate how the woman dynamic faces the problems and how she uses the counseling process, e-counseling, and face-to-face, as support to transform herself into a resilient, resilient, and forgiving person. This research also tried to see the woman's risk and protective factors as essential aspects of her resiliency.

The participant in this study was a 26-year-old woman. The data collection method used is in-depth and observation. Another source used is the result of psychological assessment used to have holistic data from the subject. Data analysis used thematic analysis. Consent to publish this case anonymously has been given by the subject for scientific use only.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Subject X (Female, 26 years old)

Stressors/Challenges. For Subject X, life was much easier when she was very young. Her mother had passed away when she was six years old, and then his father marrying her aunt. Subject X has one big brother, that three years older than her. After that significant loss, she hopes her stepmother will love her as much as her biological mother. But then she realized that her stepmother was a very different person, and she's far from what she had in mind. She does whatever it takes to please her stepmother, but she always finds fault in everything she does. He knew his father had always loved him, but there was nothing he could do to bring his new wife closer to his son. The father only asked his daughter to be more patient and understand her stepmother better. Her stepmother never gives her physical punishment, but she's not a warm, caring, loving person like her biological mother. They were a very different type of person, although they're sisters. Her stepmother's very demanding and perfectionist in everything. Even for a bit of things such as cleaning the room or arranging the table's cover. Everything must be done precisely the way she wants, or she's starting to say bad things, could at her children, and gave them wrong labels such as stupid girl, careless, had no brain, can't do anything right. Or she was staring at her in a certain way, which made her feel guilty. What she's also done often was saying to her children that she deserved better treatment, better behavior because she had done everything to those bad children, and all they could be only disappointing her. Subject X tried hard to please her and did anything she could to be the child she wanted her to be, but it seems impossible to make her happy.

His parents did not have a higher education. Therefore, his father told him to continue his education as high as possible. This message motivated him to complete his studies, no matter what obstacles he encountered while

studying at the university. He finished his college studies on time with good grades, even though he disliked the subject. He thought it would please his mother, but his mother never gave him any credit until he graduated.

The environmental conditions of subject X include family relations, especially with her stepmother, that often give her verbal and psychological abuse. Those abusive words she had very often from her stepmother made her feel inferior. She found herself lack self-confidence and has poor self-esteem. She's accepted in the best high school in the city and received in one of the best universities, but somehow, she always feels that she always did it wrong whatever she's done.

According to subject X, finishing her study on time is an ample opportunity for him to raising her self-esteem, but she found that it's never pleased her mother. She has supporting friends from high school and also classmates. For her, emotional support from his friends was function as a protective factor. Attention and support from her boyfriend (now her husband) also become a protective factor for him. Her friends, her best friends, and especially her husband were the most prominent support she struggled with within her life and the sources of her happiness.

In his resiliency process, subject X was trying to make selective perception. During communication with her stepmother, when she heard criticism from her mother, she tries to take the positive side from those critics and being motivated, even though it's not easy. When she found her mother never gives her any compliments she needs, she's trying to compliment herself, tries to says good things to herself, and tries to convince herself that her mother loves her differently. When her mother says she never does anything right, she tries to do her best. For example, she manages to finish her studies on time and gets good grades. She can reframe problems as challenges, and she goes to great lengths to solve them, especially to prove to herself that she can achieve success, no matter when her mother says otherwise.

Subject X also faced problems while trying to accomplish his thesis; most of them related to her lack of support, but those obstacles couldn't make her demotivated. She tends to use active coping (problem-focused coping) and never runs away from difficulties. When she felt sad, she promised herself not to let that disappointment went for a long time. She also started the counseling process for almost two years now and found that the counseling process has helped her reframing her problems and releasing her burdens. She said, for such a long time, but only when she finally gives herself a moment to show her tears and weakness does she feel relieved. When the covid-19 pandemic came, she did an e-counseling session with her husband. She feels much more vital when her husband supports her and accepts her in all her circumstances. The support from her husband is significant to her, making her feel accepted as she is.

Internal resiliency factors: (1) cognitive factor: She's clever and has the good academic achievement. Subject X has shown that he can reach an excellent result in his study and finished her study on time, even though she doesn't like the subject of her research; that is her parent's choice, not hers. (2) emotional factor: Subject X could manage his emotions quite well. Subject X was a compassionate person, and she's trying hard to pleased people surround her. Still, she is also trying to forgive herself because she realizes that certain people probably won't be happy. His parents also told her to study hard and to try to reach a better life. Subject X learned some techniques to help her release her burdens and help her be more able to forgive. She's doing relaxation practices. She was also practicing forgiveness therapy by doing some preparations. First, he drew an inner child to release some emotional burdens by doing the Mizan technique, empty chair therapy, and doing emotional freedom (EFT) designs. By doing various techniques guided by psychologists, he can learn to manage his emotions better (3) spiritual factors: Religion and spirituality have become his strength. As a Muslim, he is always told to be a good Muslim. The gift of Allah SWT is an essential thing in his life (4) behavioral/social competence: He has good interpersonal skills in college and his office, he has many friends, he has an excellent ability to solve his problems. (5) physical factors: generally, he is in good physical condition. With all subjects, X becomes more substantial and can become more authoritarian.

As written in Utami & Helmi (2017), the availability of the subject's protective factor could help her to buffer adverse effects from tough situations or adverse events in her life. In her case, her couple/ her husband's support and the help she got from the counseling process played a significant role as a protective factor and helped her to become more resilient.

Table 1. *The Profile of Subject X's Resiliency*

Aspects	Subject
Answer to survival questions:	
- Subject X seen her biological mother's wish and love, give her strength	
- She sees herself as a much stronger person than she thought at first	
- She loves her family so much and wants to make them happy	
- Her family: father, brother, and also her husband love her so much	
- She didn't like her subject, but she could pass it anyway with good marks	
- Most people saying good things about her	
Environmental contexts	
- Risk factors	Family relation, especially with her stepmother Verbal and psychological abuse
- Protective factors	Father's, brother's, husband's, and best friend's support Counseling with a psychologist (face to face and online)
Person-Environment transactional process	
- Perception	Positive
- Reframing	See the problem as a challenge
- Changing environment	Living separately from parents
- Active coping	Struggling hard to accomplishing her tasks, building her own family
Internal resiliency factors	
- Cognitive	She has an excellent cognitive
- Emotional	Unstable → More stable
- Spiritual	She has an excellent spiritual life
- Behavioral/social competency	She has an excellent behavioral/ social competency
- Physical	She has an excellent physical condition
Outcome	Become a more muscular woman and more resilient woman

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that subject X went through many processes that made her grow and become a more resilient woman. As Masten said, resilience does not come from rare moments, rare occasions, or only in a person with unique qualities, but from habituation, from an ordinary woman's struggle with her life. That's exactly how the subject X build her resilience. Step by step, she reaches a higher state of resiliency. She successfully transformed and used her counseling process (offline and online) to empower herself to become her more resilient self. Subject X had also shown us the psychodynamics aspects in building resiliency. They were individuals who cope effectively with stresses and become a stronger person.

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