

FAMILY RESILIENCE FACTORS IN CONFLICT REGION

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ABSTRACT

Aceh is one of provinces in Indonesia exposed to traumatic events such as armed and politic conflict for decades until the Tsunami disaster in 2004. The impact is structural damage to the socio-cultural and society wellbeing. Most studies of the conflict are reviewed from pathological life experience perspective which managed individually, however some studies showed that experience in life may produce positive effect called resilience. Family resilience can occur in various contexts, but in the conflict context are still understudy, especially in Indonesia. The aim of this research was to identify determinant of family resilience in Aceh. The research used qualitative approach with case study method. Depth interview was conducted on three families with eligibility criteria i.e. had violence both personally and family member during conflict period 1998-2005, aged over 25 years, staying together with family and living in North Aceh. The result showed that factors affecting family resilience in conflict region consisted of religiosity, coping flexibility, social support, optimism and family structure. Furthermore, individual resilience in family contributed to family resilience in facing challenges and difficulties due to conflict.

Keywords : Family Resilience, Conflict, Aceh

INTRODUCTION

Aceh conflict is a protracted conflict which was not resolved since period 1953, 1976, 1989-1990, 1998 and after 1998. Conflict occurred was very complex and multidimensional because the source of problems were not only caused by separatism but also other sources. Aceh conflict is one of the latent conflicts which the core has been developing since pre Indonesia independence so that resilience to deal with external stressor has become the original character of Acehnese people (Nurhasim, Patji, Alihar & Lamijo, 2003). The result of the research of society psychosocial need that affected by conflict in 2006 and 2007 on 5,389 citizens in three regencies i.e. Pidie, North Aceh and Bireuen, it was identified they had mental disorder due to conflict. These regions had the highest level of conflict escalation among others. The level of traumatic incident and psychologic symptom consecutively i.e. Pidie 33%, North Aceh 36%, and Bireuen 55%. Some findings relate to mental health i.e. society experienced accumulative traumatic incident in the high level due to violence. In addition, there were significant differences among regions both traumatic incident and psychologic symptoms (International Organization of Migration, 2006; 2007).

People who are directly exposed to the conflict, had difficulties to think positively, difficult to understand other's needs and trust other people so that

resulting on difficulties to solve problems. Attack behaviour is a manifestation of the response when something is viewed as a threat which is interpreted as self defense, however it has been become the following abusers as a result of violence victims (Zain, 2009). Previous research about war, humanism tragedy or disaster focuses on pathology and management for individual and community. While role, function and system of family are less obvious as one positive or negative determiners for individual who experienced trauma due to traumatic incident. Family as an integral unit of community is very essential to determine the way of community recovery after occurring massal trauma. Regardless of the level of trauma, family is a core of the whole recovery because massal trauma effects in all people, generations, and time are able to be reduced by appropriate handling in the family.

A number of studies conducted in various countries have shown that role, function or character of family in dealing with traumatic incident, including family reinforcement and community resilience on traumatic loss and disaster (Walsh, 2007); family process, coping and resilience due to war trauma among survivors (Chaitin, 2003; Kimhi, Eshel, Zys berg, & Hantman, 2010); family resilience (Lietz, 2011); family adaptation among war survivors (Fox et al, 2012); resilience plot and reinforcement for individual, family and community with sistem approach (Landau, Mittal & Wieling (2008); Betancourt & Khan, 2008).

Family strength is relate to the term of family resilience. Family resilience is root from individual resilience. According to Undang-Undang Number 10 of 1992, family resilience is a dynamics of a family which has tenacity, toughness and physical, material, psychological, mental and spiritual capability for independent life, developing self and their family to achieve a harmonystate to improve mental and physical prosperity.

Family resilience is associated with individual or family capability to use their potentials to deal with life challenge, including ability to restore family functions as previous in facing with crisis challenge. Family resilience is related to family ability to manage problems based on resources to meet their family needs. It is measured with system including component input (physical and non physical resources), process (family management, family problem, coping mechanism) and output (accomplishment of physical and psychosocial needs) (Sunarti, 2001).

The construct of family resilience explains situation i.e a family facing with high level of stress is able to maintain healthy function although it appears the negative impact of the difficulties. Long term impact studies of traumatic incident such as war, there are a number of things can be learnt i.e how survivors' family overcome memories of the past including post war adaptation strategy. However, there is few studies concentrate on family, mainly role of family in adaptation process in difficult condition and suffering. Walsh (1996) mentioned that family resilience refers to problem solving process and family adaptation as functional unit. Family change is things that happen in a family and can be a stress source for the family.

One of conflict impacts is family resilience collapse, particularly for them who have been direct survivors for instance disturbance of economic, social and psychological condition. To survive, most families of conflict victims chose to evacuate, migrate out of Aceh and urbanize to municipal areas. The objective of

the research was to identify factors affected family resilience in Aceh which have been exposed by conflict for decades.

METHODS

Participants, Design, and Procedures

Participants in the study were families experienced violence in Aceh conflict period after the revocation of the establishment of the Military Operations Area in Aceh between 1998 and 2005. Participants were selected using snowball sampling through key informants. Research location was selected purposively i.e North Aceh which experienced high level of conflict escalation. Interview was conducted on three families with eligibility criteria ; had violence both personal and family member during conflict period 1998-2005, aged over 25 years, staying together with family and living in North Aceh. The research used qualitative approach with case study method. Data collection was conducted with interview and observation.

Data analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) explained that data analysis in quantitative research implemented through three phases i.e data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion. Since the beginning of data collection, researchers decided “meaning” of something, made note of regularity, patterns, explanation, potential configurations, causal plot and proportions. After that, the conclusion was also verified through triangulations, discussions, case analysis, reference materials and member checking.

RESULT

Table 1. Respondents' socio demography

	Family M	Family N	Family Z
Experience in conflict time	Husband was murdered	Husband was murdered	Husband was murdered
Year occurred	2001	2002	2002
Number of family members	3 children, mother, brother/sister, nephew/niece	1 child, father, mother	2 children, mother, brother/sister, nephew/niece
Education	3 year diploma	High school	High school
Occupation	Temporary teacher	House wife	House wife
Source of income	Incentive fees and husband's pension	Selling cakes, farming	Laundry worker, farming

Analysis Result

Based on interview has been done, it was found category to map conflict victims of family resilience in North Aceh

1. Experience during conflict phase : three families had lost their family members i.e husband or the head of family. It happened between 2001 and 2002.
2. Family difficulties. Post incident stressor was financial disturbance due to loss of main breadwinner. The role of head of household shifted to wife.
3. Feeling : All families stated that they were still hurt, disappointed, trauma, angry and resentful but they did not how to manage their emotion because there were not few who had the same fate like them. During Aceh conflict, a lot of families loss male figure in their family therefore these families adjusted the grief. For many years, community has been doing coping from pressure both internal and external. Trauma grief of conflict incidence experienced conflict or occur due to chronic feelings of loss, however it is different with depression, acute anxiety and post traumatic stress. According to Prigerson, et al (Neria & Litz, 2003), there are two components in trauma grief i.e separation distress because of losing figure engaged and traumatic stress is adjustment to live without the figure.
4. Meanings of the incident experienced. Family of the conflict victims interpreted the events experienced as will from Allah. Destiny issomething inevitable despite at the beginning it was difficult to accept husband's death which was not known its cause. Patterson (2002) described family resilience is equal with individual resilience. Resilience concept needs more than managing full pressure condition, burden or defence to deal with distress. Family resilience is also called family regenerative strength i.e a process in a family to restore balance (reduce demands, improve capability and or change intrepertation) and successful with satisfying results. The existence of resilience enables to function family members mainly in the context of family adaptation for stress.
5. Coping. Each family has different strategy to face with difficulties post incident. Coping strategy which is used depends on the problems. Coping strategy has two main functions i.e managing problems which cause pressure and managing emotion relate to the pressure (Morgan, 2008; Cheng, 2001). Coping strategies are reflected in these families i.e
 - a. Emotional coping, trying to seek peace with painful situations, it is unpleasant and uncomfortable. It is done by speaking to other people, crying, listening and sharing feelings with others who are experiencing similar things.
 - b. Strategy spiritual. Family feelsfind help by getting closer to the Almighty in order to be stronger through worship (e.g., praying, remembrance,reciting Al Qur'an, and prayer) and religious activities.
 - c. Strategies focus on the environment. Participate the activities in their environment helps to reduce the perceived pressure .
 - d. The strategy focuses on problems in daily life.Since coping strategies are varies, it could be said that be the victim's family has the flexibility coping so they can adapt finely. As stated by Kato (2012) and Cheng (2001) coping flexibility is the ability of a person to effectively modify coping behaviors based on the nature of any stressful situation. In

addition, transactional theory considers more flexibility in coping that will produce adaptive behavior.

6. Support received. Support received by the victim's family comes from extended family. In Aceh, large family structure is one of its characteristics in the society life. Large family becomes the major support provider for attention and assistance to fulfill the needs of daily life. This is easy to do because the large family live nearby. In addition, the help comes from friends, neighbors, governmental and non-governmental institutions. The support includes materials, for instance scholarships for the children, and death fund called *diyat*.

DISCUSSION

Eight years after Aceh conflict ends with a peace agreement between Indonesia and Aceh independence movement, violence inheritance is still a part of daily reality of Acehnese people. Even though the survivors, family and the society receive a better security situation, they still demands for the truth, justice, and another improvement. One item of Helsinki's MoU in 2005 i.e establishment of commission of truth and reconciliation (KKR) as an institution which resolve the problem of violations of human rights in Aceh (Amnesty International, 2013; Gobel, 2011). Aceh conflict is not a horizontal conflict that can be solved by traditional law mechanism with directly involving the subjects and survivors. Aceh conflict is a vertical conflict caused by the economic political and social injustice, so it is difficult to be solved traditionally.

In a long and serious conflict situation, the human rights violations occurring in Aceh has influenced to the psychological state of the community especially survivors and families who had direct violence in the conflict time. A number of family members rised and reduced in uncertainly especially man for a father figure, husband, brother, die tragically, lost and or separated suddenly. It caused the family became physically and emotionally unstable that led to the collapse of the family resilience.

Family resilience is a complex process that involves social, psychological and biological factors that has efforts to overcome the negative consequences of the pressing events and help families and individuals to adjust to the difficulties of life. Resilience is more than just having the ability to manage the challenges that facing a hardship, a burden or struggle to face the ordeal. In the resilience, there is potential of personal change and social relationship as well as the growth caused by the success in facing suffers.

Factors of family resilience in Aceh refer to key elements of the families resilience as stated by Walsh (2007):

1. Family's belief system that consist of meaning of misfortune and positive outlook.
2. Family's pattern, consist of flexibility, close relationship, social and economicsources.
3. Communication processes that consist of emotion expressions and coping.

Belief will set behavior or action of the person .The family develops belief system (belief about the world and the relationships of individual with the world) that affects how family sees the world and responds correctly for their survival. This belief system gives a feeling of unity for families undergoing events in their lives. As known, the majority of Acehnese people are muslim and live

daily based on the value of Islam. Reality of Acehese people can be concluded as a totality of the Islam teachings that has become a view of life (way of life). This view of life affects people throughout their activities including how they respond to any problems such as conflict. The proximity of Islam in any activities of Acehese people makes all problems always seen as the will of the Almighty. The strength of the religious doctrine from the outset for the people of Aceh so that every problem cannot be separated from the intervening The Most Creator, religious reasons of acceptance factor makes survivors of Aceh conflict quickly move to continue their lives quickly.

In addition, the ability to address the problems and the ability to survive while depressed / difficulty obtained from the attention of family and community. One of the habits of the Aceh community in responding to everyone who got casualty or catastrophe is by visiting the survivors with the purpose to console so that he/she will not always dissolve in grief. This habit is also a suggestion in the religion that has been being customary for the people of Aceh.

According to McCubbin & Patterson (VanBreda, 2001), family resilience consists of two phases i.e the adjustment and adaptation. Adjustment phase regardsto the family's stress and influenced by protective factor which supporting family from the impact of pressure. Whilst adaptation phase is relate to family's crisis that healing factors has major role for the family to facing with pressure. Family's resilience is understood by seeing the family members as individual resilience that are potential for family to be protective factors in life.

CONCLUSION

The research indicates that conflict in Aceh has impacts on the entire of community's life i.e physical and psychological impact on the entire of community's life. This has led to the decline in family resilience and function of family life. However, naturally individual have the ability to adapt with difficulty. And similar with the family, naturally families of the victims of human rights violations in the conflict in Aceh adapt to the difficulties caused by the incident.

Change in family life of victims of conflict Aceh ideally encourage the government to provide assistance so that family have greater access on health, both physical and psychological to function healthily and can meet the family's function better. Furthermore, access for economic and education sources consistently can help family to achieve welfare.

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