Building Children's Resilience in The School Environment: A Literature Review

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Abstract. Resilience is the ability to survive, adapt, overcome obstacles and rise from failure, disappointment or rejection. The early years of a child's development are essential to understanding, encouraging and building resilience. The concept of resilience built in children must consider a holistic perspective, meaning that the capacity to develop resilience is different for each child. It is influenced by factors within the child (innate) and the surrounding environment, such as parents, teachers, peers, culture, economic level, and complex society**. Methods.** The method used in this study is a systematic literature review, using an online platform using the keywords resilience among children and resilience among kindergarten. **Objective.** This literature describes one factor that affects a child's resilience, namely the school environment. PAUD institutions or kindergartens have an essential role in this regard. Teachers and principals can design programs and interventions to support resilience in early childhood. This current article will investigate the importance of resilience by describing studies tapping resilience among students at kindergarten. **Results.** The study results show that children's age greatly determines their resilience. Teachers must have the proper perspective on resilience to become role models, and schools or PAUD institutions are suggested to plan programs to develop children's resilience as well as interventions for children at risk. **Conclusions.** The results of this study are expected to be considered by decision-makers in schools, principals and teachers to build children's resilience from an early age.

Key Words. Resilience, Early Childhood, School Environment

INTRODUCTION

For many years, multidisciplinary studies have focused their research on the consequences of depression. Depression seems to be an avoidable part of living. Difficult circumstances, such as a pandemic, natural disaster, or war, may cause trauma. Further, people are still facing adversities in their life: bullying, poverty, divorce, death of loved ones, harassing in the workplace environment (1,2).

Most people would assume that these problematic circumstances would be destructing both adults and children. However, it is children who suffer more because they do not have the cognitive ability to understand the situation or make changes and take preventive actions to avoid traumatic events or difficult situations (3,1).

Resilience does not only need to be developed in adults because everyone experiences difficult and unpleasant times with their own version, as well as children. Children's resilience needs to be developed from an early age because healthy parenting and optimal stimulation will prepare children to have good potential in starting the next phase of life (2)

Parents are the main factor in developing resilience in children (4). It shows us that resilience, or the ability to adapt to stressful situations, is formed from an early age and is not formed immediately when an individual becomes an adult. In other words, resilience is an active ability, not static. Through the capacity from within themselves, children are influenced by the surrounding environment to form their resilience. In this case, resilience can be built in children (5).

An environment is a place for children to learn. Early childhood institutions are environments that provide opportunities for children to develop their personal, academic and socio-emotional abilities (6). These environments are in a unique position to provide protective factors that may serve to increase resilience (5).

Research describes that social skills lay the foundation for children's academic success and school adjustment. The quality of early interactions between early and preschool teachers and children affects and predicts a child's overall development (7).

The objective of this study is to give teachers and decision-makers an overview of the concept of resilience, how risk factors, protective factors, age of children, and teachers' perspective affect the development of children's resilience; describe intervention strategies for children at-risk and plan programs or strategies to build resilience in the school environment.

METHODS

The retrieval of published studies for the review included a structured search of the following electronic databases: PubMed, Google Scholar, Research Gate, and Elsevier, published in the last ten years (8). However, if the published studies are beyond the last ten years, they are still considered to be taken for this study. The search strategy was designed to be inclusive by searching using the keywords: resilience among children and resilience among kindergarten (8). In addition to searching from international sources, this review was carried out by searching for national sources through the keywords "anak tangguh" and "resiliensi anak usia dini".

RESULTS

Definition

Resilience is the ability to bend but not break, bounce back, and even grow in difficult situations (10). However, resilience is a relative concept. It means that the capacity to develop resilience varies among children. It is influenced by factors from within the child (innate), the surrounding environment such as parents, teachers, peers, and other aspects (11, 4).

Risk Factors and Protective Factors

It is vital for researchers to consider children from a holistic perspective. Children's capacity differs, influenced by factors within the child and the surrounding environment. Two concepts are linked with the definition of resilience: risk factors and protective factors (4). Risk and protective factors are referred to at an individual and environmental level. Risk factors are the factors that increase the stress which individuals may encounter. For example, low socio-economic background, poverty, negative parental attitudes, separation from parents or having a single parent, death of parents, sick parents, genetic conditions, child abuse/neglect and negative life experiences (12).

Strength or coping strategies in individuals that help deal more effectively with stressful events are called "protective factors". Protective factors have a significant impact on child development. Protective factors may be found at individual, family and community levels. These factors include; (1) positive temperament, marked self-esteem, ability, and social responsiveness; (2) a supportive family environment that includes a solid relationship with at least one parent; and (3) social support in a non-family environment, such as school or community. In the literature, for example, positive personality traits are listed in the category of individual protective factors. In addition, some factors such as intelligence, problem-solving skills, temperament, self-regulation skills based on temperament, coping skills, and social competence are also defined as protective factors. It is important that protective factors outweigh the impact of risk factors that may be exist in children's close surroundings because protective factors can moderate the effects of different risks (4, 12).

Understanding, encouraging, and empowering resilience in early childhood is very important. These early years are essential for preventing and reducing risk, increasing resources and competence, and building a strong foundation for future development. It is, therefore, necessary to identify risk factors and protective factors in children's lives to understand how to develop resilience and support children. As essential adults in children's lives, teachers play a significant role in supporting resilience (13).

The Role of Age in Resilience

Some research found that 6-year-old children had higher emotion regulation skills than 5-year-olds. According to the teacher evaluation, in a study that examined the resilience levels of preschool children, teachers stated that the resilience levels of seven-year-old children were higher than the six-year-old and the five-year-old was higher than the four-year-old (14). The age of children determines the resilience of a child. Children's emotional regulation generally increases with age. In terms of interaction, there is a significant difference in initiative, self-regulation, and attachment. Therefore, the resilience of a 5-year-old child is different from the resilience of a 6-year-old child (4, 14).

Regarding age, initiative, self-regulation, and total children's resilience showed certain development in age. Firstly, there are significant differences in the dimensions of initiative, self-regulation, and attachment/relationship in age. At the same time, initiative and self-regulation increased with age, while attachment/relationship decreased. With the growth of children's age and mental maturity, the degree of dependence on parents will gradually decrease. The formation of personal domain consciousness helps children constantly form active consciousness and form their unique emotional regulation form (14).

With the gradual deepening of society and continuous contact with the environment, children's physical and mental development problems gradually increased. It is suggested that parents and teachers help children learn to express and adjust their emotions correctly and give appropriate guidance so that children can express their emotions. Emotion is the internal development of a person's whole life. It plays an important role in personal growth, which will not only produce different emotions when getting along with their families, peers, and teachers but also need to learn to express and adjust their emotions and understand others' emotions in adverse circumstances. However, people's performance in the face of disadvantage varies greatly: some people choose to face setbacks bravely, but some people feel frustrated. The internal mechanism of this difference has attracted extensive attention from researchers (14).

Teacher's Perspective

Teachers must have the proper perspective on resilience (3, 6, 10). Teachers can support children's capacity toward resilience during learning, whether inside or outside the school. However, parents play an essential role in supporting children's capacity for resilience (2).

Research has shown that preschool teachers' implicit beliefs about appropriate educational practices have substantial implications for teaching and their educational practice decisions. Generally, teachers' attitudes are underpinned by deeply held beliefs and values, which majorly influence children's behaviour (6).

Further, teachers' emotional competence affects their ability to contribute to the development of children's emotional and social competencies. Issues related to the surrounding educational context (e.g., job stress or staff/ child ratio) can impact teachers' socialization of emotion, easing or hampering their ability to be a positive force in developing children's emotional competencies (6).

Kindergarten teachers, as the first educators for children, after parents, must have the proper perspective on resilience and become role models for early childhood. The professional aspects of a teacher are concrete support to build children's resilience (6).

Qualitative analysis of what enhances resilience shows that teachers" opinions on increasing resilience only partially overlap with those of parents. This difference can be explained by the teachers" professional viewpoint and the parents" private, familial point of view. According to teachers, the important aspects of professional life are concrete help and support that teachers can receive from each other or from the kindergarten's team of experts, mutual respect and appreciation, and building motivation – encouragement, keeping informed, cooperation – teamwork and creating a work plan. The latter is similar to being well organized, a characteristic mentioned by parents. Parents' resilience is increased by: experience, problem-solving (instead of passivity and despair), clear parental goals, setting limits in the child's upbringing, and having realistic expectations of self and others. Problem-solving is among the most critical features of resilient families. Teachers say resilient persons are able to endure more stress. Stressors can increase competence if the stress levels are not too high (6).

Intervention for Student at-risk

There are many intervention strategies for young children. Early childhood teachers could build a program that includes many elements of intervention strategies, such as free play, relaxing, learning new skills, spending more time with their parents, teaching children multiple social skills, including negotiation and interaction skills while they play, self-control, problem-solving, and emotional awareness (2)

An intervention should be done for children at risk to increase resilience. The suggested intervention is Positive Cognitive Triad. Positive Cognitive Triad is an individual positive view of themselves, the world and the future (15).

How individuals perceive and interpret adversity affects how they feel and relate to the world. Depressed individuals have been found to view themselves, their world, and their future in a negative fashion, which is referred to as the negative cognitive triad. Resilient individuals may have a favourable view of themselves, the world, and the future (hereafter referred to as the positive cognitive triad), which promotes their positive emotionality and life satisfaction and protects them from depression. In other words, being resilient promotes the development of positive cognitions about themselves, the world, and the future that enhances well-being and ameliorates distress (16).

Positive View of the Self and Well-Being: Resilient people are often self-efficacious, confident, and determined. People with such characteristics will likely generate more positive self-talk that boosts their self-image and promotes self-agency. With such a positive frame of mind, resilient people develop a positive view of themselves, which prompts them to seek out and attend to experiences that positively reflect on themselves to maximize their psychological well-being. To thrive in the midst of hardships, resilient individuals need to have strong faith in themselves and believe they are worthy of better conditions in life. People with high trait resilience have been found to have high self-esteem and self-confidence. Such high self-regard pushes resilient individuals to persist and endure in times of struggle (16).

Positive View of the World and Well-Being: Because studies have demonstrated that resilient people have an energetic approach to life, are curious and open to new experiences, and have interpersonal insight, trait resilience would be associated with a positive view of the world. People with a high level of resilience tend to have a positive outlook toward the world, which motivates them to bounce back from adversity and move forward. With a positive view of the environment, they can see opportunities in difficult situations and find solutions for tackling problems (Wang, 2009). They are also more likely to solicit external support to help themselves. When experiencing stress, individuals with more social resources are less likely to perceive the situation as threatening. Instead, they regard social resources as support and hence have a greater sense of mastery when facing challenges. In a longitudinal study among college students, individuals who held a positive view of the world enjoyed better subjective well-being, including purpose in life, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance.

Positive View of the Future and Well-Being: Research suggests that resilient individuals display confident optimism for the future. Previous research has demonstrated that college students with a high level of hope are less influenced by the negative impact of stress and hence have fewer health problems. Moreover, they are likely to embrace self-agentic talk, such as "I can do this" and "I am not going to be stopped". When individuals come across problems, self-agency helps them apply the requisite motivation to the best alternative pathway. Previous research indicated that people with high hope have better problem-solving skills. They are more likely to accept challenges and adopt more active coping strategies than passive-avoidant ones. As a result, they are more likely to sustain themselves under stress or in the face of problems. A longitudinal study on the hope found that hope could predict middle school students' life satisfaction and externalizing and internalizing behaviours over one year.

Resilience is proposed to foster positive views of the self, the world, and the future within individuals. Such intrapersonal cognitive capacity (positive cognitive triad) propels individuals to better cope with stress and adversity and facilitates overall well-being. In the present study, we examined the impact of resilience in adopting a positive cognitive triad on life satisfaction and depression. Although resilience is developed based on socialization practices

and learning in the family and the environment, the positive cognitive triad reflects more of the current cognitive schema of the individuals, which actively interacts with the recent experiences that individuals are facing. Moreover, although the conceptual links among resilience, life satisfaction, and depression mentioned above are vital, few empirical studies have directly examined their relationships with an explicit attempt to tie them together. Likewise, the mediating role of a positive cognitive triad between trait resilience and different facets of well-being has yet to be examined. Therefore, our aim in this study was to test the mediating role of the positive cognitive triad between trait resilience and well-being (16).

Programs and Strategy

There are many strategies that schools can use to enhance resilience. These include approaches to providing a safe and supportive learning environment and positive teacher-student and peer relationships (17).

Brave Children! Program

Kindergarten schools are suggested to plan programs to develop children's resilience as well as intervention for children at risk (17)).

Brave Children!, a pilot program conducted in three public preschools in Kakrow, Croatia, led by a young psychologist, held over six months of Resilience Program for young children aged five to five years eleven months. The leader of this program used two hand puppets who would engage in conversation with children. The program in which children's resilience is built is carried out through various activities in the form of games, motor-skill activities, art classes, sing-a-long activities, dialogue or discussion. The program focused on six key areas. They are self-awareness, self-control, self-agency, social skill, coping with stress and problem-solving. It is proved that the outcomes showed an increase in protective factors in children taking part in Brave Children! program (11).

Family-School Partnership

Relationships or connections between parents and teachers could promote partnership. In partnership, preschool involves parents actively so that there is continuous cooperation and communication between teachers and parents to support optimal children's resilience. In this case, such a collaborative partnership is easier to establish because parents and preschool teachers communicate on a daily basis when parents take children to and from kindergarten. This kind of support becomes a protective factor for the children. Parents and teachers build the child's social and emotional competence, well-being and growth, academic skills, self-advocacy and mastery (18).

DISCUSSIONS

It is crucial for researchers to consider children from a holistic perspective. The capacity of children is different from one another. They are influenced by factors from within the child and the surrounding environment. The school environment is social support in a non-family environment listed in the individual protective factors category. So, schools must prepare a conducive environment so that resilience in preschoolers can be built at school.

CONCLUSIONS

Resilience is the ability to bend but not break, bounce back, and grow in difficult situations. It is a relative concept that children's capacity to develop resilience varies. It is influenced by factors from within the child (innate), the surrounding environment such as parents, teachers, peers, and other aspects.

Resilience among children can be developed at school and supported by teachers. Teachers are suggested to plan the activities and focus on the six key areas: self-awareness, self-control, self-agency, social skill, coping with stress and problem-solving.

Kindergarten schools are suggested to plan programs to develop children's resilience as well as intervention for children at risk. The results of this study are expected to be considered for decision makers in schools, principals and teachers to build children's resilience from an early age.

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