

# POSITIVE IMPACT AMONGS SURVIVORS SUFFERING

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**Submission date:** 13-Nov-2023 01:00AM (UTC-0600)

**Submission ID:** 2198175279

**File name:** POSITIVE\_IMPACT\_AMONGS\_SURVIVORS\_SUFFERING.pdf (140.8K)

**Word count:** 2517

**Character count:** 13609

## POSITIVE IMPACT AMONGS SURVIVORS SUFFERING PHYSICAL DISABILITY

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out the positive impact for the earthquake survivors, suffering physical disability in the District of Pundong, Bantul. Two survivors participated, as subject, in this research. This study uses observational methods, depth interviews and Focussed Group Discussion (FGD). Data obtained in this study were collected using qualitative methods namely the phenomenological approach. Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques that analyze and draw conclusion from the themes that emerged. It is also done through triangulation of data-group using FGD with the group of people with disabilities. The FGD was conducted twice with 20 and 7 people. Based on the results of interviews, observations and FGD, found that some subjects are still sad to accept the handicapped, but then turned out with this situation. The subjects then get some positive aspects, they are: 1) the psychological aspects; 2) the social aspects; 3) the cognitive aspects; 4) the material aspects; 5) the spiritual- religious aspects. This study provides illustration of the response of the Javanese in the face of disaster.

**Keywords:** positive impact, physical disability

### INTRODUCTION

Many studies found that undesirable events can also cause positive changes to individuals or society. This research examined how people suffering physical disability transform their life and got benefit from their negative experience. Discovered by Linley & Joseph (2005) the acceptance of events and social support associated with positive changes experienced by individual. Individual will appreciate other people more and thank for their next life. In line with that opinion, Tedeschi et al. (Salo et al., 2005) argued that traumatic experiences can be a starting point for individuals to gain a sense of strength, wisdom and selflessness.

The phenomenon of negative changes in post-trauma affected more often discussed and researched but not for positive changes experience. The positive impact of trauma was found on some of the survivors as families of cancer patients (Mosher, 2006), cancer patient (Mystakidou et al., 2008; Steel et al., 2008), political prisoners (Salo, et al., 2005), university students (Taku et al., 2008), patients of acute respiratory syndrome (Cheng et al., 2006), war veterans (Maguen et al., 2006), survivor of Madrid train bomb (Val & Linley, 2006) and people with spinal-cord injury (Chun & Lee, 2008). The personal growth aspects come from powerful personality, positive relationships with others, and increasing spirituality (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1998).

Many earthquake survivors in Bantul are disabled, whether young or old. Survivors with disabilities, especially young and productive survivors, require

intensive assistance for improving posttraumatic growth in order to remain able to work in the handicap. Attempts to explore the potential of the handicapped became an important thing to do. The problem in this study was formulated as follows: Do people suffering physical disabilities feel the positive impact of their disability? What are the positive things that they feel after the disaster.

Theoretically, this study will be useful to develop the science of psychology, especially the indigenous psychology, namely the science of psychology is rooted in the culture of their own community as well as positive psychology, especially regarding the positive impact of a disaster.

## **METHOD**

Subjects were two patients with paraplegia; FGDs were conducted twice with the subject of 7 people and 20 people. The participants were recruited by contacting the leader of a disabled organization in the district of Pundong, Bantul. Focused group discussion was conducted with 20 and 7 people.

The interview was the primary investigative tool for the study. The secondary methods of data collection in this research using observational methods and FGD (Focused Group Discussion). We conducted interviews in the participant's homes. Interviews lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours and were tape-recorded.

Researchers and research assistants conducted the GD facilitators, on 29th April 2009, and conducted individual interviews to study subjects from April to August. Researchers are assisted by four (4) final year students of the Faculty of Psychology as interviewer and two psychologists to conduct FGD (Focused Group Discussion). Interviews conducted at the home of each subject and more than two times of visits. At first there were 3 subjects but one subject is plagued by its nature a very quiet so the interview did not proceed. The first FGD was attended by 20 people, but only some are active and the second FGD was attended by 7 people. Researchers used a tape recorder with the consent of the subject. In general, the subject can be brought together to answer the matters in question.

Data obtained in this study were analyzed using qualitative methods namely the phenomenological approach, data will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques that analyze and draw conclusions from the themes that emerged, it is also done through triangulation of data-group discussions focused on groups of people with disabilities.

## **RESULTS**

Based on the results of interviews, observations and FGD, found that some subjects are still sad to accept the handicap, but then turned out with this situation. The subjects then get some positive aspects, those are:

1. The psychological aspects, such as controlling emotions better trained for the subjects to practice patience. In an interview a survivor said "besides the material, em... I think we can learn how to be more patient and not become emotional, before this earthquake I had a high temper, and I usually get angry all the time" (Subject H). Another survivor also said "There is a different attitude to

- handle my emotion before and after the disaster. Before I was easily to get angry, after the earthquake still I can't make a deal with my temper, but then I realize that I have to set up my mind. I must try to be more patient " (subyek S).
2. The social aspects, such as adding new friends. The subjects felt that the earthquake helped them controlling their emotions and added new friends. "The way to get up from this condition, by increases our self esteem. Yes, We must be confident. Even though we are now a handicaper, but still we are a human being and we are the same. I believe a handicaper can easily get new friends just like a normal people. Before I have so many friends, now after the earthquake I have so many more" (subjek H). "Yeah thats it, we can make a new friend. We meet new people. Before we didnt know each other but now we are friend. We are in the same condition so we can support each other" (subjeck S).
  3. The cognitive aspects, namely increasing insights, for example, knowing the term of therapy and how to provide relief to survivors of a broken bone. "Ya, we learn from the hardest thing. Before we didnt know how to give the first aid for injured victims cause by accident. We didnt know the theory. Now we know that we can not just hold the victims, because that will be dangerous (Subjek S).
  4. The material aspects, such as prosperity increased sa the subjects that now have a home previously did not have or have a home previously but not proper "now thank God, I used to have no home now have a home. I used the trauma in a long time, was still remembered my house that collapsed, I was given a long life, still able to walk and had a home" (FGD subject). " now I already have a house even better than before "(FGD subject).
  5. The spiritual- religious aspects, subjects consider disaster as acts of God that show resignation (acceptance) of experienced events or as a form of resignation to God, feel closer to God. A survivor said, "I feel so sad to realize my condition. I was sad when my wife and kids away from me. My child's had a broken spine, while he was only seven months. He was treated in Betesda while my condition likes this " but then He still thanks to God by saying "Before my doctor Predicted me paralyzed. Wow ..... I have already known first ..... ha ha .... (laughs). Yes, I had my legs broken, but I always say thanks to God. This is the big teachings that God gives to me. For me It's a gift from God. " (subject H). Survivors also said, "now even to pray tahajud (night praying), increases of worship to God, if there are nights like a wake (for worship)" (FGD subject). Subjects also showed attitudes which showed that they were connected to God by praying or mentioning the God's name when the earthquake happened ie "Allahu Akbar". While expressing their gratitude they say "Alhamdulillah". They said, "God warned His people, reminding the sins so as not to be repeated again..." (FGD subject)

## DISCUSSION

2 The findings of this study is that the subjects would have positive things after post-traumatic events in line with previous studies (Salo et.al, 2005). According to Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004a, 2004), subjects can feel positive things such as personality stronger, higher aspirations of life, relationships with others more positively, spirituality increase and get new opportunities. This study found the aspect of relations with others, such as adding new friends, and aspects such as controlling emotions and psychologies better trained. New opportunities have also felt that the subjects such as venture capital, get a house, prosperity increased. Spiritual-religious

aspect seems stronger for Muslim subject that is expressed by a belief that misfortune is a providence of God and an expression of gratitude to say "Alhamdulillah" behind their suffer. This will be a positive thing for the healing process. According to Frankl (Bastaman, 2007), a healthy person can find positive meaning in any pain. Admission to the event (acceptance) and gratitude is expected to be a kind of psychotherapy for individuals with problems or become a medicine for the heart in pain (Al Jauziy, in 2005, Al-Ghazaliy, 2007).

Finally, based on the results of interviews, observations and FGD, found that some subjects are still sad to accept the handicapped, but then turned out with this situation. The subjects then get some positive aspects, they are: 1) the psychological aspects, such as controlling emotions better trained for the subjects to practice patience; 2) the social aspects, such as adding new friends; 3) the cognitive aspects, namely increasing insights, for example, knowing the term of therapy and how to provide relief to survivors of a broken bone; 4) the material aspects, such as prosperity increased as the subjects that now have a home previously did not have or have a home previously but not proper; 5) the spiritual- religious aspects, subjects consider disaster as acts of God that show resignation (acceptance) of experienced events or as a form of resignation to God, feel closer to God, and the subjects often say the words gratitude by saying " Alhamdulillah" (thank God) that indicates the subjects still thank of God for still being given a long life or feel grateful for his family being surviving.

Serat Wulang Reh written by Sri Susuhan Paku Buwana (Harsono 2005) mentions about the way to reach good quality in live. Those are sleepless and eat less, increasing the sense of sensibility, living peacefully in togetherness, having good behavior, and practicing share'ah law. Sri Mangkunegoro VI write also in Serat Wedhatama (Syafroni, 1986; Jatmiko, 2007) how to be gentle, humble, quite, pure, sincere, forgiver, respect, and believe in God power. Those learning combined by religious value and influence people point of view toward something.

Disability sometimes makes the sufferers desperate but later -based on research- we have found individual who survive and get positive impact from the disaster.

2 The findings of this study is that the subjects would have positive things after post-traumatic events in line with previous studies (Salo et.al, 2005). This study has several limitations, such as all of the subject are male and there is no validation of data get through the family but only through FGD. Suggestions for further research is to take women as research subjects, and have a family as informant or as data resources.

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