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Stress and Stress Coping Strategies of Student Victims of Sexual Violence at SMP Negeri "X" Patebon

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Abstract

This research aims to describe the impact of victims of sexual violence on students at SMP Negeri "X" Patebon and the stress coping strategies for students who are victims of sexual violence on the experience of sexual violence experienced by students at SMP Negeri "X" Patebon. The research used was qualitative case study type research with a total of 5 students as participants. Data was obtained through interviews and then analyzed using qualitative analysis, by detailing the data followed by a coding process to interpret or make sense of the data. Based on interviews

conducted with participants who were victims of sexual violence at SMP Negeri "X" Patebon, they felt stress and serious adverse impacts, both psychological and academic. The effectiveness of coping strategies can vary depending on the individual, the particular stressor, and the context. Participants' use of a combination of coping strategies depended on the nature of the stress they faced. Understanding and using healthy coping mechanisms can help individuals better manage stress and improve their overall well-being.

Keywords: Adolescents, Stress Coping Strategies, Victims of Sexual Violence

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of sexual violence against children is increasingly occurring and has become global in almost all countries in the world. Sexual violence is all forms of sexual threats and coercion, in other words sexual violence is sexual contact that is not desired by one of the parties (Thamrin and Farid, 2010). Tragically, the perpetrators of sexual violence come from the family environment or the environment around the child, including at home, school, educational institutions, the child's social and social environment (Noviana, 2015) ^[11].

KPAI data in 2021 revealed that as many as 201 children and teenagers were victims of sexual violence, with a vulnerable age group aged 3-17 and the highest number of victims were junior high school or MTS age at 36% of the total number of victims. Then in 2022, there were 4,683 complaints coming in from direct complaints, indirect complaints (email), online and the media. The highest case was the type of case where children were victims of sexual crimes with a total of 834 cases. These data indicate that Indonesian children are vulnerable to becoming victims of violence and sexual crimes with various backgrounds, situations and conditions of children wherever they are. Meanwhile, the highest number of complaints about sexual crimes against children came from children as victims of sexual abuse, 536 cases (625%), children as victims of sexual violence, rape or sexual intercourse, 285 cases (33%), children as victims of same-sex sexual abuse, 29 cases (3%), and children as victims of sexual violence, rape or same-sex intercourse, 9 cases (1%) (KPAI, 2022).

The very rapid sexual development and body development in adolescents certainly influences sexual maturity, meaning that the sexual organs are fully functional (Friedman, 2003) ^[5]. Adolescence is a transition period that often exposes teenagers to situations that are confusing and cause conflict, teenagers easily fall into their peer groups, so they want to get and provide support (Sarwono, 2018). Adolescents who are victims of sexual violence are often not effective in resolving coping problems naturally, where coping is an individual process of managing the gap between stressful situations and their own ability to fulfill these situations (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) ^[6].

The results of research by Fajrin & Christiana (2020) ^[3], the impact of sexual violence is more complex, such as feelings of fear, discomfort, withdrawal, poor social adjustment, feeling low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence. For victims, this causes feelings of discomfort and intimidation (Tawaa & Silaen, 2020) ^[19]. According to Wijaya *et al.*, (2020) ^[21], the impact felt as a result of sexual violence is emotional memories, namely actions or impulses from past situations that are embedded in the

mind. Research by Marianti *et al.*, (2019) ^[9] shows that symptoms of post-traumatic stress due to sexual violence in adolescents are re-experiencing traumatic events and changes in behavior. Victims of sexual violence often remember the incident, experience sleep disturbances, nightmares, avoid thinking about trauma that will remind them of the incident, inability to feel various kinds of positive emotions, decreased interest in other people, distancing themselves from the environment, irritability, negative emotions. Explosiveness, difficulty concentrating, feelings of anxiety and excessive startle response.

To overcome the impact of sexual violence, coping strategies are needed. The research results of Sihombing *et al.*, (2018) ^[16] teenagers who are victims of sexual violence before receiving social support generally have coping strategies by seeking support from other people in the form of real help, thinking about how to solve problems, giving up in facing problems, not caring about the problem, seeking support to calm down yourself and forget about stressors. Broadly speaking, coping is divided into 2, namely: problem focused coping and emotion focused coping. Problem focused coping is a problem-focused coping strategy and is also called a cognitive strategy, where individuals take action to overcome problems through logical thinking. The concept of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) ^[6] explains that there are five forms of strategy in problem focused coping, namely the first is active coping, namely the process of taking steps to eliminate stressors and reduce their impact. The second is planful problem solving, namely looking for ways to overcome stressors and thinking about strategies for action, steps to take and how to best overcome problems. The third is suppressing competing activities, namely a form of coping that is focused on problems, in which individuals try to limit themselves, their movement space and activities that are not related to the problem. The fourth is restraint coping, namely waiting for an opportunity not to act prematurely. The fifth is seeking social support, which is a strategy used to overcome stress by asking other people for help, both material and non-material. Emotion focused coping is a strategy for providing emotional responses. Individuals focus on efforts to reduce negative emotions, for example by avoiding problems, self-blaming, self-regret, and seeking emotional support.

In emotion focused coping, there are five aspects, namely the first is seeking social support for emotional reasons, namely seeking social support for emotional reasons, namely by seeking moral support, understanding and sympathy. The second, positive reinterpretation and growth, reinterpreting positively and growing is interpreting stressful situations with a positive outlook. Third, acceptance, accepting stressful situations and surrendering to the existing situation. Fourth, turning to religion, namely facing all stressful situations by returning to religion which is considered to provide spiritual and emotional support. Fifth, denial, namely refusing to believe in the existence of a stressor or trying to act as if the stressor does not exist.

Based on the explanation above, researchers are interested in conducting research and research with the aim of describing the forms and impacts of sexual violence as well as describing the stress and coping strategies of students who are victims of sexual violence at SMP Negeri "X" Patebon, examined from the perspective of Lazarus theory coping strategies.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative research method that uses a case study approach. According to Sugiyono (2017) ^[17] qualitative research is naturalistic research that studies the daily lives of certain people and subjects. To ensure the validity of the data, the source triangulation method is used, namely to obtain data from different sources using the same technique (Sugiyono, 2017) ^[17]. Content analysis is used to make sense of the descriptive qualitative data collected. This analysis was carried out by detailing data obtained from interviews and observations with participants and other informants. The participants in this research were five students from SMP Negeri "X" Patebon with the following criteria: (a) Have experienced sexual violence (b) Still have status as students at SMP Negeri "X" Patebon (c) have anxiety in the moderate to high category based on screening results subject, (d) Does not experience problems in communicating, (e) Willing to participate in research with a verbal statement.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the research, a description of the experience of sexual violence, the life background of the participants, the background to the occurrence of the sexual violence case, the experience of victims of sexual violence, the impact and coping strategies of participants who were victims of sexual violence were found. Participants in the research were students who were still studying at SMP Negeri "X" Patebon and had been victims of sexual violence.

Participant NS experienced sexual violence from her senior NS *"he pushed me into the room and threw me on the bed, continued to squeeze my genitals, kissed me and squeezed my breasts, then I ran out of the room, in the living room I was also pushed again on top sofa and he tried to rape me."* DSR participants experienced sexual violence from male friends in the DSR class *"Her breasts were grabbed, ma'am, squeezed by a male classmate, there were 16 boys, it was during recess so there was no teacher."* Participant DW experienced sexual violence from a neighbor, DW *"At first I was playing with a friend at night and when I came home I didn't know who it was, suddenly from behind it seemed like I was holding a knife to my neck and then suddenly I was told to touch his genitals."*

Participant PS experienced sexual violence from his senior PS *"On Tuesday, I wanted to go to the dirty bathroom too and I wanted to borrow a broom from class 9 "bro, borrow a broom" and he kept pointing at his hand and then sreeettt like that (hands were grabbed by several class nine children) When I entered the classroom, the door was locked and my pants were taken off and my clothes were stripped off, they were playing with my genitals, they were laughing and then their hands were kissed on my nose and mouth"* and participant EL experienced sexual violence from her boyfriend EL *"At that time the house was quiet, then he raped me, I I felt scared and sick, ma'am, but I couldn't do anything, I couldn't sleep that night, but I couldn't refuse because I love my boyfriend."*

From the research results, the five participants experienced stress. Stress is a condition of physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses to an event that is considered threatening or challenging to the individual (Cicarelli, 2014). The stress responses experienced by the five victims were being lazy about going to school, withdrawing, having

irregular sleep patterns, having difficulty eating, being irritable, crying often, anxious, helpless, afraid, disappointed, having difficulty concentrating and blaming themselves. These stress responses ultimately had an impact. In daily life and decreased academic achievement. In line with the opinion of Finkelhir and Browne (2009) [4] that sexual violence tends to have a traumatic impact on both children and adults. The research results of Dewi *et al.*, (2019) [2] also found that children who were victims of sexual violence experienced somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, self-blame, difficulty concentrating, unable to control problems, fear of their own thoughts, bad feelings, sleep disturbances, crying alone and want revenge.

The stress conditions experienced by the five participants were in the moderate level category, according to Potter (in Puspitaningsih and Kusuma, 2017) [12]. At this moderate level of stress, individuals begin to experience discomfort in daily activities, have difficulty sleeping, are often alone, tense and anxious. In line with the results of Putriana's research (2018) [13], victims of sexual violence experience stress in the moderate category in the form of anxiety that arises including mood symptoms in the form of bad mood, feeling sad, easily annoyed, easily panicked, easily angered, feeling tense and feeling anxious. Cognitive symptoms include frequent daydreaming, worry and being more alert. Somatic symptoms include headache, trembling, dizziness, nausea and easy sweating. Motor symptoms: feeling restless and easily nervous.

Participants used coping strategies that were considered capable of helping them resolve the problems they were experiencing. Initially, both male victims with male perpetrators and female victims with male perpetrators chose to accept the events they had experienced as part of themselves that could not be changed. By accepting participants, they will have the strength to continue their lives and activities as usual. However, this was not easy, the victim experienced uncertain emotional turmoil due to environmental stimulation which made the participant remember the incident of sexual violence they experienced. Therefore, staying away from the source of stressors was the second strategy carried out by participants. The five participants implemented a coping strategy, namely a combination of problem focus coping and emotional focus coping.

In problem focused coping, participants apply aspects of suppressing competing activities, because participants try to limit themselves, their movement space and activities. NS participant "I am more comfortable at home and rarely play. I don't want to see or remember the perpetrator anymore, I've blocked his contact and changed a new number", participant DW "I don't dare go out at night because I'm always in the shadows and I'm still afraid of boys", participant DSR "I had time to skip school because of course I was traumatized by being embarrassed by meeting friends, ma'am," participant EL "At that time, I was still afraid of hanging out with men, trying to find new friends and staying at home more." NS and EL participants also used the restraint coping aspect, namely waiting until there was an opportunity not to act before the time, NS "Yes, I've just given up, it's like what happened," participant EL "I kept quiet and didn't tell anyone, I thought I'd disappear automatically". Then the third of the five perpetrators used the aspect of seeking social support, namely a strategy used to overcome stress by asking other people for help, DW "I

didn't tell my friends, but at that time I confided in it and reported it to Mrs. Dhany (council teacher) two days after incident", DSR participant "I reported it to BK and told my parents and my parents even came to school, ma'am...", PS participant "I once told Raska, my classmate in class 7F, yes, he was just normal, ma'am, just kept quiet didn't answer, then I reported it to BK."

According to Lazarus & Folkman (1985) [7] coping strategies that focus on emotions, individuals tend to make efforts to modify emotional functioning without changing the stressor directly. Individuals can regulate their emotional responses in various ways such as seeking emotional support from other people, NS "I am calmer when I call my mother", participant DW "I don't tell my friends, but I tell Mrs. Dhany (counseling teacher)", participant DSR "I reported and told my parents, until my parents came to school ma'am", PS participant "Reported to the guidance and counseling teacher."

Apart from that, doing activities that you like, for example traveling, doing fun activities and taking part in organizational activities at school, NS participant "I like the hobby of modifying motorbikes", DSR participant "I keep myself busy at OSIS ma'am, is that possible? I will join what is a group to protect children from being eliminated or not getting bullying and sexual violence like me", participant EL "I am looking for new friends and playing in a new, more fun environment", Participant PS "I make toy cars and trucks and the bus is made of wood and I play with motorbikes."

Apart from that, participants carry out religious activities by surrendering and drawing closer to God. Participant NS "Yes, after that incident I prayed, ma'am, and drew closer to God so that this incident would not happen again", participant DW "I, overcame my negative feelings and emotions with istigfar ma'am, and prayed", participant DSR "I What's more... be patient, be patient, be patient, always be in my mind, always remember Allah and be patient, be patient and pray more", PS participant "Continue to pray the Koran, ma'am, that's what religion is about, so that I can be calmer", By getting closer to God, participant gain a sense of calm and avoid negative thoughts. After obtaining all of this, participants focused on organizing their lives again, such as being enthusiastic about going back to school to continue achieving their goals, and carrying out daily activities with friends and family. The coping strategies used by the five participants were also influenced by various supporting factors. Lazarus and Folkman (in Sujadi, 2015) [18] stated that the factors that influence coping strategies are determined by the individual's own resources. Internal and external factors greatly influence and are able to help participants in implementing their coping strategies. Children with strong self-confidence to avoid sources of pressure and the presence of a physical environment that supports these strengths are the main factors so that children are able to get through their psychological critical period (Malloy *et al.*, 2013) [10].

Internal factors consist of inner strength, inner motivation which gives the participant confidence in being able to accept and overcome the problem and make the incident not an obstacle to the future. This motivation makes participants enthusiastic about going to school again and confident in carrying out daily activities both at home and in the surrounding environment.

Apart from internal factors, of course there are also external factors that provide support for participants, such as support from family and peers, support from teachers. The presence of family as the main supporter gives participants the strength to reorganize their future and move on with their lives. Apart from that, the support of peers and teachers at school also helped reduce the pressure faced by the participants. The presence of this pressure cannot be separated from the participants' own efforts. Alaggia (2010) revealed that children who grow up in an environment that provides support also have a definite effect on increasing their ability to resolve the pressure or stress they experience. Effective coping produces lasting adaptations that are new habits and improvements to old situations. Meanwhile, ineffective coping ends in maladaptive behavior, namely deviant behavior that can harm oneself or others or the environment (Rusman, 2004). If the five participants are able to manage sources of pressure, it can be said that the coping used is effective. The five participants applied a combination of Problem Focused Coping and Emotional Focus Coping, focusing on finding a way out of problems by implementing various steps. If an individual can use his coping behavior well then, he can make social adjustments well too (Sarwono, 2007). Based on the explanation above, it can be summarized in the image below:

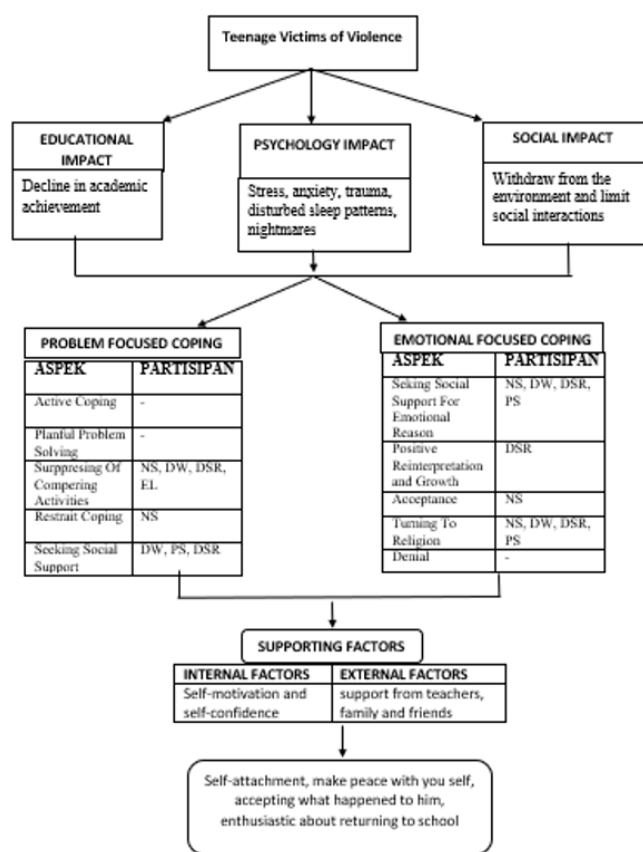


Fig 1: Combined Analysis Chart

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that sexual violence that occurred at "X" Patebon State Middle School students experienced prolonged stress, negative emotional turmoil, psychological trauma, disrupted social relations, and decreased academic performance. The sexual violence that befell students at SMP Negeri "X" Patebon had similar problems, namely coercive actions by

the perpetrator. Victims of sexual violence have ways to solve their own coping problems, known as coping strategies. Coping strategies are efforts both cognitively and behaviorally to overcome, relieve, tolerate, internal and external demands.

The coping strategies possessed by the five participants who were victims of sexual violence were influenced by several supporting factors, namely external and internal supporting factors, internal factors were influenced by the individual's own self-confidence and motivation, while external factors were support and motivation from peers, family, Guidance and Counseling teachers and other school officials. The results of this research show that children and teenagers are vulnerable to becoming victims of sexual violence, both men and women, therefore teenagers must be more careful in their relationships and choosing their peers, if sexual violence occurs immediately seek help from parents, school or authorities.

For further research, a more diverse variety of participants is needed so that it can provide an overview of the stress coping strategies of adolescent victims of sexual violence from various situations. Several variations of participants that can be studied further include cultural background, age of participants, level of education. It is hoped that more detailed research will provide greater benefits for child victims of sexual violence, schools, families and the wider community. For victims of sexual violence, the results of this research show an overview of coping strategies, thus victims of sexual violence can use the results of this research as a reference so they can apply coping strategies after experiencing sexual violence.

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