

## Subjective Well-Being of Aceh Adolescents after Tsunami: The Meaning of Disaster and Adolescent Happiness

Tina Afiatin

Faculty of Psychology, Gadjah Mada University

The tsunami impact, December 26, 2004 in Aceh left physical, psychological and social injuries to Aceh people, including adolescents. The purpose of this research is to comprehend how the Aceh adolescents explain the tsunami and the impact to their lives. The qualitative research was conducted in Banda Aceh three and a half years after the tsunami with the phenomenology method for two months. Results indicated that the tsunami was differently interpreted by Aceh adolescents. The difference was influenced by their background including, their family life, personality and coping styles. Cohesiveness and family strength was influential to the individual susceptibility toward the tsunami impact. The sense of independence, optimistic, social sensitivity and religiosity made them stronger in facing the tsunami impact. The Aceh adolescent happiness after tsunami was greatly influenced by the individual way to interpret happiness and to get the source of happiness.

*Keywords:* meaning, tsunami disaster, adolescent happiness.

Dampak Tsunami, 26 Desember, 2004 di Aceh meninggalkan luka fisik, psikologis, dan social pada masyarakat Aceh, termasuk para remajanya. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah memahami bagaimana remaja Aceh memaknai tsunami dan dampaknya terhadap kehidupannya. Penelitian kualitatif dilaksanakan di Banda Aceh tiga setengah tahun setelah tsunami dengan metode fenomenologi selama dua bulan. Hasil-hasil menunjukkan bahwa tsunami dimaknai berbeda oleh para remaja Aceh. Perbedaan tersebut dipengaruhi latar belakangnya, termasuk kehidupan keluarga, kepribadian dan gaya kopingnya. Kohesivitas dan ikatan keluarga berpengaruh terhadap kepekaan individu menghadapi dampak tsunami. Rasa bebas, optimistik, sensitivitas sosial dan religiositas membuat mereka lebih kuat dalam menghadapi dampak tsunami. Kebahagiaan remaja Aceh setelah tsunami sangat dipengaruhi bagaimana individu menginterpretasi kebahagiaan dan bagaimana memperoleh sumber kebahagiaan.

*Kata kunci:* makna, musibah tsunami, kebahagiaan remaja

Why should we explore about the happiness of Aceh adolescents after the tsunami? Most people would say that the Aceh adolescent survivors or the tsunami survivors would feel unhappy. Is that really the case? It was the main reason which triggered my curiosity and encouraged my exploration in order to understand, experience, and construct

meaning, which was not free from my own subjectivity about the meaning of happiness. I had become more enthusiastic when I started the interview with one of the adolescent survivors who stated: "After the tsunami, we feel wealthier apparently... the Acehnese children have become more free and courageous..."

The study which was conducted in Banda Aceh from the beginning of July 2008 for the period of two months has turned out as a great experience for me in the process of learning the dynamic of the adolescents' lives three years after the tsunami. Adolescence is one of the stages in the human development which is usually determined by a rapid development of physical, mental, and social aspects. Adolescence is the transition period from the childhood, in which an individual tends to be dependent on the independent adult. This stage

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr.Tina Afiatin, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Jl.Sosiohumaniora 1, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta 55281. E-mail: afiatin2303@ yahoo.com.