

## The Role of Resilience in Minimizing Conditions of Learned Helplessness in Undergraduate Students at Universitas Negeri Malang

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### Abstract

The condition of learned helplessness is a condition that is vulnerable to undergraduate students. Various conditions of learned helplessness in students can be caused by changes in the environment, daily activities, and even academic challenges. Furthermore, this condition can impact a state of depression and even suicidal ideation in students. Various efforts are made to minimize or inhibit the negative impact of learned helplessness conditions by students through strengthening internal strengths within individuals, such as resilience. This research was conducted to see the role of resilience in minimizing conditions of learned helplessness among undergraduate students at Universitas Negeri Malang. This research is quantitative research with a correlational research design. Participants in this research were active undergraduate students at Universitas Negeri Malang. The instrument used to measure learned helplessness is the Learned Helplessness Scale (LHS) and the Adult Resilience Measurement Revised (ARM-R) for resilience. Both of them were adapted into Indonesian. The total participants involved in this research were 85 students from 8 faculties ( $M$  is equal to  $19.99 \pm 1.66$ ). The results of the research show that there is a role of resilience in the condition of learned helplessness among undergraduate students of Universitas Negeri Malang, which is 23 percent.

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### Abstrak

Kondisi ketidakberdayaan yang dipelajari merupakan kondisi yang rentan dialami oleh mahasiswa. Beragam kondisi ketidakberdayaan yang dipelajari pada mahasiswa dapat diakibatkan karena adanya perubahan lingkungan, aktivitas sehari-hari, hingga tantangan akademik. Selanjutnya kondisi ini dapat berakhir pada keadaan depresi hingga ide bunuh diri pada mahasiswa. Be-

ragam upaya dilakukan untuk meminimalisir ataupun menghambat dampak negatif atas kondisi tidak berdaya yang dialami oleh mahasiswa, salah satunya melalui penguatan kekuatan internal dalam diri individu, seperti resiliensi. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk melihat peran resiliensi dalam meminimalisir kondisi ketidakberdayaan yang dipelajari pada mahasiswa Universitas Negeri Malang. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kuantitatif dengan desain penelitian korelasional. Partisipan pada penelitian ini ialah mahasiswa S1 aktif di Universitas Negeri Malang. Instrumen yang digunakan untuk mengukur ketidakberdayaan yang dipelajari ialah *Learned Helplessness Scale* (LHS) serta untuk resiliensi ialah *Adult Resilience Measurement Revised* (ARM-R) yang keduanya diadaptasi ke dalam Bahasa Indonesia. Total partisipan yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini sebesar 85 mahasiswa yang berasal dari 8 fakultas ( $M$  sama dengan  $19,99 \pm 1,66$ ). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat peran resiliensi terhadap kondisi ketidakberdayaan yang dipelajari pada mahasiswa Universitas Negeri Malang, yaitu sebesar 23 persen.



## INTRODUCTION

Learned helplessness is a response to stress that cannot be controlled, characterized by weakened behavioural responses and loss of motivation, decreased cognitive function in learning the correct response, and weakened emotional responses (Swanson et al., 2012). This condition is described by the individual's inability to deal with complex problems continuously, weakening the individual's response to learning to overcome the situation. The result is that individuals cannot overcome the problem even though they have alternative solutions (Mohanty et al., 2015). A research conducted by Ekechukwu & Isiguzo (2015) shows that learned helplessness in adolescents is associated with depression, locus of control, and low self-concept. This relates to teenagers who are in a period that is vulnerable to failure and give up easily.

Apart from the adolescent stage, the young adult stage is also a vulnerable period for developing stress pathology and post-traumatic events (Galatzer-Levy et al., 2012; Valdés et al., 2022). This can be caused by individuals at the young adult stage experiencing changes in the environment, daily activities, and changes in social support. In addition, at this stage, individuals are entering their first year at university, so they will find new academic challenges, bringing them to a new environment without direct parental sup-

port and need to build social support from the new environment (Uehara et al., 2010). This can also lead to a condition of learned helplessness. Students' learned helplessness condition is also closely related to the academic context (Dağgöl, 2018).

An empirical study conducted by Ziegler et al. (2021) shows that individuals' subjective interpretation of learning contributes to the formation of helplessness in students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another study shows that academic procrastination can arise due to conditions of learned helplessness that develop over time (Prihadi et al., 2018). This condition of learned helplessness is also a model of depression (Seligman & Peterson, 2001). According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), depression is a feeling of unhappiness, hopelessness, and loss of motivation and interest in everything done frequently. Depression is one of the mental health problems in students that is currently of concern because students or young adults are vulnerable to this, especially during COVID-19 (Ettman et al., 2020).

The prevalence of depression among students in Malaysia in one study showed that 30% (of a total of 1,203 respondents) of students had experienced depression (Islam et al., 2018). In line with this, studies in China also show that

the prevalence of depression among students in China is in the high category (Lei et al., 2016). A study shows that academic stress can cause depressive symptoms in students (Zhang et al., 2022). Another study shows that social exclusion in life will increase rejection sensitivity, which results in low individual self-efficacy, leading to an increased risk of depression in a student (Niu et al., 2023). In their study, Lima et al. (2021) showed that helplessness in students is also correlated with the emergence of suicidal ideation and poor academic performance. The vulnerability of learned helplessness to depression and suicidal ideation in undergraduate students underscores the importance of intervention in managing the risk and impact of learned helplessness.

In minimizing states of depression or helplessness, resilience is seen as a complex system that includes biological, psychological and social aspects and an ability to regulate stress in daily life (DiCorcia & Tronick, 2011). Studies related to resilience show a relationship between resilience and reduced stress and difficulties experienced related to social restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Noh & Park, 2022). Resilience also minimizes depression and anxiety (Reivich et al., 2013). In line with this research, individuals with high resilience scores also show low anxiety, stress and depression (Ghogare et al., 2022).

However, research related to the role of resilience in conditions of learned helplessness in students is still limited and needs to be studied in more depth. Therefore, this research aims to look at the role of resilience in minimizing conditions of learned helplessness in students. Hopefully, this research can provide a theoretical contribution to preventive and intervention efforts for conditions of learned helplessness in students through strengthening resilience.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This research was conducted using quantitative research methods. Quantitative research entails

measuring variables to obtain scores from individuals as research participants. These numerical scores will be included in data analysis and results obtained for interpretation (Gravetter & Forzano, 2016). This research design uses correlational research, carried out without manipulating research participants but rather to see the relationship between research variables (Field, 2009).

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study were students at Universitas Negeri Malang. The criteria for participants in this research were active undergraduate students at Universitas Negeri Malang aged 18–25 years. Researchers used proportional clustered sampling techniques. Universitas Negeri Malang consists of eight faculties with different student compositions. Sampling at each faculty was given appropriate proportions to represent each faculty. So, the total number of participants in the research was 85 students.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected by filling out a research questionnaire distributed as a Google Form. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were given informed consent as a basis for stating the participant's willingness to take part in this research activity. Participants who are not willing to take part in the research will be allowed to stop. Furthermore, each participant's data will be kept confidential following the research code of ethics in psychology.

### **Research Instruments**

Data was collected using several research instruments to measure learned helplessness and resilience.

#### ***Learned Helplessness***

The condition of learned helplessness was measured using The Learned Helplessness Scale (LHS), initiated by Quinless and Nelson (1988). This measuring instrument consists of 20 statement items. The rating range for each item ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). This instrument was also adapted into Indonesian. Test the validity and reliability of

items using Aiken’s V from expert assessment and discrimination and reliability tests on test subjects (n = 41 people) and the main research subjects (n = 85 people). The results of the validity test on the test subjects were declared valid (Aiken’s V > 0.6).

Next, the discrimination index and its reliability were tested using corrected item-total correlation. An item is declared to have passed the discrimination index test if it has a value of > 0.3 (Azwar, 2010). Nine items were declared invalid. So, 11 items were declared passed and reliable (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.823).

**Resilience**

The research instrument used to measure resilience in young adults is the Adult Resilience Measure-Revised (ARM-R), initiated by the Resilience Research Center (Ungar, 2016). This scale consists of three factors: individual factors, caregiver/parents, and context. This scale consists of 17 statement items with a Likert rating scale, ranging from 1 = very inappropriate to 5 = very suitable. In this research, researchers adapted the measuring instruments into Indonesian.

In the adaptation process, researchers carried out several stages, such as translating measuring instruments and testing the validity and reliability of items. Test the validity and reliability of items using Aiken’s V from expert assessment, discrimination index test, and factor loading values from confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) calculations, as well as reliability on test subjects (n = 41 people), as well as validity and reliability tests on main subjects (n = 85 people). The re-

sults of the validity test were declared valid (Aiken’s V > 0.6; factor loading > 0.50) and reliable (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.954).

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis used in this research used SPSS 23 software. Researchers used descriptive analysis to look at the demographic characteristics of participants (age, gender, faculty), descriptions of resilience, and conditions of helplessness learned by participants. Linear regression analysis was used to see the magnitude of the contribution of resilience to the condition of learned helplessness.

The hypothesis proposed in this research is that resilience contributes to learned helplessness in students of Universitas Negeri Malang.

**RESULTS**

Table 1 describes participant characteristics. The participants involved in this research were 85 students from eight faculties at Universitas Negeri Malang, consisting of the Faculty of Psychology (15.3%), Faculty of Letters (15.3%), Faculty of Mathematics and Science (15.3 %), Faculty of Education (15.3%), Faculty of Social Sciences (12.9%), Faculty of Sports Sciences (11.8%), Faculty of Engineering (9.4%), and Faculty of Economics and Business (4.7%). Based on the classes involved in this research, they consisted of the class of 2019 (3.5%), class of 2020 (17.6%), class of 2021 (27.1%), class of 2022 (47.1%), and class of 2023 (4.7%). Based on gender, most participants were women (69.4%), and the others (30.6%) were men. The average age of participants was 19.99 + 1.16 years.

Table 1.  
Participant Characteristics

Variables	Frequency	
	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	26	31
Female	59	69

Variables	Frequency	
	n	%
<b>Faculties</b>		
Faculty of Economics and Business	4	4.7
Faculty of Sports Sciences	10	11.8
Faculty of Education	13	15.3
Faculty of Social Sciences	11	12.9
Faculty of Mathematics and Sciences	13	15.3
Faculty of Psychology	13	15.3
Faculty of Letters	13	15.3
Faculty of Engineering	8	9.4
<b>Class Group</b>		
2019	3	3.5
2020	15	17.6
2021	23	27.1
2022	40	47.1
2023	4	4.7
<b>Average Age</b>	19.99 ± 1.16	

Next, table 2 shows the participants' learned helplessness and resilience levels. The level of helplessness learned by participants was in the very high category at 4.7%, the high category at 28.2%, the moderate category at 36.5%, the low category at 25.9%, and the very low category at

4.7%. The participants' level of resilience was in the very high category at 2.4%, in the high category at 36.5%, in the moderate category at 36.5%, in the low category at 20.0%, and in the very low category at 4.7%.

Table 2.  
Description of Learned Helplessness and Participant Resilience

Variables	Frequency	
	n	%
<b>Learned Helplessness</b>		
Very high ( $32 < x$ )	4	4.7
High ( $27 < x \leq 31$ )	24	28.2
Moderate ( $22 < x \leq 26$ )	31	36.5
Low ( $17 < x \leq 21$ )	22	25.9
Very low ( $x \leq 16$ )	4	4.7
<b>Resilience</b>		
Very high ( $83 < x$ )	2	2.4
High ( $73 < x \leq 82$ )	31	36.5
Moderate ( $63 < x \leq 72$ )	31	36.5
Low ( $53 < x \leq 62$ )	17	20.0
Very low ( $x \leq 52$ )	4	4.7

Analysis was carried out to see the magnitude of the contribution that resilience made to conditions that were not studied by participants (Table 3). The hypothesis test results using a linear regression test show that the adjusted  $R^2$  value is

0.230 with  $p = 0.000$ . This shows a significant contribution of resilience to the condition of learned helplessness in participants, amounting to 23%.

Table 3.  
Contribution of Resilience to Participants' Learned Conditions of Helplessness

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
Resilience	0.489	0.240	0.230	26.151	0.000

Furthermore, the regression equation model was  $Y = 40.574 - 0.243X$  (Table 4). This shows that the directional coefficient of linear regression is negative, so if the resilience variable in-

creases or increases by one value, it can be concluded that the condition of helplessness learned in students will decrease by 0.243.

Table 4.  
Regression Coefficients

Variable	Unstandardized Coef.		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	40.574	3.291	12.327	0.000
Resilience	-0.243	0.048	-5.114	

## DISCUSSION

Through the research results that have been presented, it was found that the hypothesis of this research was proven, namely that resilience contributed to the condition of helplessness learned by the participants. The results of the descriptive analysis of this research show that the level of helplessness learned by participants is in the sufficient category (36.5%). A study explains that one of the causes of helplessness in students is their subjective interpretation of an uncontrollable situation (Ziegler et al., 2021).

The description regarding participant resilience also shows that it is in the sufficient category (36.5%). This finding aligns with a qualitative study by Ang et al. (2022) on Gen Z students. In that study, it was explained that the participants had a high resilience category. This was partly due to the ability of each participant to build resilience through themselves and other surrounding external factors. Other studies also

show that coping mechanisms, personality, and academic achievement are predictors of resilience for students (Findyartini et al., 2021). A study of students at a university in Ethiopia provides a picture of resilience in the high category (79.5%) (Feyisa et al., 2022). Likewise, a study conducted in Southeast Sulawesi showed that 56% of students were in the high resilience category (Pambudhi, 2021). Differences in the categorization of resilience using various measuring tools could be one of the reasons for differences in resilience categories in several studies.

The results of hypothesis testing show that resilience plays a role in minimizing the condition of helplessness learned by participants. Resilience is defined as a form of capacity that individuals have in facing difficult situations (Masten, 2021). The focus on resilience also emphasizes positive individual, social and contextual variables, which play a role in changing

risky developments into positive developments (Zimmerman, 2013).

In facing conditions of helplessness, especially due to academic stress, resilience is a protective factor against the emergence of depressive symptoms due to academic stress (Versteeg & Kappe, 2021). One study shows that resilience is related to positive forms of coping (Wu et al., 2020). Pidgeon et al. (2014) also stated that students with low resilience scores were significantly associated with low levels of social support, connectedness to campus, and high levels of psychological distress. Another study explains that students with high academic resilience have 1.73 times the ability to maintain and improve their academic performance (Dwiastuti et al., 2022). This shows that students with high resilience scores can display good forms of adjustment at university (Rahat & Ilhan, 2016).

Studies related to the role of resilience in minimizing conditions of helplessness learned by students this is in line with the framework of resilience itself, namely that the role provided by resilience can occur through a series of interactions. This interaction involves risk factors and protective factors contained in the individual's environment. This interaction pattern can be in the form of interaction between humans and the environment as well as between situations or conditions and internal aspects of the individual so that this interaction will produce various conditions, such as the individual becoming stronger than the initial state, returning to the initial state before the stressful situation, or being in a maladaptive condition which puts individuals in the low resilience category (Tariq et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2023). In minimizing learned helplessness in students, resilience is seen as an internal strength that is able to make individuals stronger in facing various pressures so that the individual will be able to survive and maintain their psychological well-being.

## CONCLUSION

There is a negative correlation between resilience and learned helplessness, which means that resilience plays a role in minimizing conditions of learned helplessness in students. Resilience can occur through patterns of interaction between individuals and the environment or the conditions they experience. This interaction will then shape individuals with various conditions, such as being resilient, so that individuals can become stronger in facing situations that cause helplessness. Further research can be carried out on a broader subject and look at other variables besides resilience as predictors that can play a role in minimizing the condition of learned helplessness in undergraduate students.

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