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READING *BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ* BUILDING RESILIENCE AND ABILITY TO GET OUT OF SUFFERING

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Abstract

Literacy of the Hindu scriptures, namely Bhagavad-gītā, is proven to be able to build resilience and the ability to get out of suffering. This study measures the Resilience and Coping Strategy of Bhagavad-gītā readers in Bali. The results showed that the motive and frequency in reading Bhagavad Gita together played a role in resilience. The results showed that the the Bhagavad-gītā readers' resilience was influenced by 41.5% by the motive (the inner desire to read Bhagavad-gītā) and the frequency of reading Bhagavad-gītā. Apart from that, the coping strategy are also valuable for Bhagavad-gītā readers. The Resilient and Coping strategy together have a massive role for individuals to survive and even find a way out during difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion also proves that literacy has real impacts on its readers, such as building strength, endurance and ability to get out of crisis. In addition, suicide is not an option in a crisis, as many people do.

Keywords: *Resilience, Coping Strategy, Bhagavad Gita, crisis.*

Abstrak

Literasi kitab suci Hindu yaitu Bhagavad-gītā terbukti mampu membangun ketangguhan dan kemampuan untuk keluar dari penderitaan. Penelitian ini mengukur Resilience and Coping Strategy pembaca Bhagavad-gītā di Bali. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa motif dan frekuensi membaca Bhagavad Gita secara bersama-sama berperan dalam resiliensi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa resiliensi pembaca Bhagavad-gītā dipengaruhi oleh 41,5% oleh motif (hasrat batin membaca Bhagavad-gītā) dan frekuensi membaca Bhagavad-gītā. Selain itu, strategi koping juga bermanfaat bagi pembaca Bhagavad-gītā. Strategi Resilient dan Coping secara bersama-sama memiliki

peran yang sangat besar bagi individu untuk bertahan bahkan mencari jalan keluar di saat kesulitan akibat pandemi COVID-19. Gagasan ini juga membuktikan bahwa literasi memiliki dampak nyata bagi pembacanya, seperti membangun kekuatan, daya tahan dan kemampuan untuk keluar dari krisis. Selain itu, bunuh diri bukanlah pilihan dalam krisis, seperti yang dilakukan banyak orang.

Kata-kata kunci: *Resiliensi, Coping Strategy, Bhagavad Gita, krisis.*

1. Introduction

The benefits of literacy in the Vedic Scriptures and Hindu literature have been convinced by the sages since ancient times. The Upaniṣads which are an important part of the vedic corpus teach that literacy is not just the ability to read but also the ability to comprehend, reflect and build excellent human character by developing various aspects and dimensions such as intellectual, understanding, attitude, emotional and spiritual. (KadekSurpi, 2021) states that literacy in the Upaniṣads builds higher inner strength, intellect and awareness in order to understand the right perspective on life. However, nowadays, with the changing way of thinking of humans, everything in the sacred literature needs to be tested scientifically because modern people are very dependent on new ways to believe in things.

This study reveals the impact of Bhagavad-gītā literacy on resilience and coping strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bali. As it is understood, the background of Bhagavad-gītā is a crisis, that is the great war that engulfed humankind more than 5000 years ago (Aryadharma, 2019). Crisis is one of the events that humans often face and therefore a special strategy is needed to encounter it. This strategy is implicitly taught in this sacred scripture to guide

Arjuna (as a symbol of mankind), out of a threatening crisis situation.

An important teaching in the study of Bhagavad-gītā is Sthītaprajñā which is defined as resilience. *Sthītaprajñā* is not defined as mere physical strength but rather courage and equanimity and the ability to endure the crisis or discomfort situation. Another important value is that courage is called with the word *Abhayam* which is also synonymous with the word *Anasakti*. This teaching of resilience and the ability to endure and find a way out of this crisis situation is the central point of the Bhagavad-gītā background. This research is the evidence that the literacy of Bhagavad-gītā actually has a huge impact on its readers. Research on the positive impact of reading Bhagavad Gita was conducted by Dabas and Singh, involving a group of students in India, which according to this study found a statistically significant impact on resilience, expectancy and optimism (Dabas & Singh, 2018). This finding is related to the fact that for the Indian community, the intervention of mantras and sacred texts is more convenient to be included since it is closely related to the culture that has become part of the community life.

This study uses the subject of *Bhagavad-gītā* readers who have reading experience for at least one year consistently, have completed all Bhagavad-gītā chapters and are in mature age.. From the measurements

carried out, it is found that the resilience of Bhagavad-gītā readers is influenced by 41.5% by the motive and frequency of reading Bhagavad-gītā. However, further tests showed that the motive had a greater influence than the frequency of reading. This means that the inner encouragement to read or that is done consciously, makes a better contribution than reading due to encouragement from other parties or just carrying out religious obligations (Surpi, Istriyanti, et al., 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected all aspects of community life. The crisis due to this pandemic has caused great impact and difficulties for the Balinese community in general. In addition to the economic impact, the direct impact of this pandemic is the psychological impact such as fear, anxiety and significant activity restrictions.

The results of this research showed that the experience of reading Bhagavad-gītā in terms of motives and frequency in reading Bhagavad-gītā played a role in resilience and the selection of adaptive coping strategy. As many as 79% of Bhagavad-gītā readers choose to use *problem focus coping* when dealing with difficult problems or situations during covid-19 pandemic. It means, Bhagavad-gītā readers show high resilience and have excellent coping strategy. Bhagavad-gītā readers do not regret difficult situations, let alone act destructively and detrimentally, however they try to persevere and find a way out of the difficulties they encounter. In fact, they are filling their time during the Covid-19 pandemic with beneficial activities such as reading, learning together with their families, doing good activities even though there is limitation in what they can do and spending time with family, friends and the closest community.

Interestingly, whether there was suicidal ideation in response to this difficult situation, all respondents gave the answer no. This data show as well that apart from resilience, the Bhagavad-gītā readers realize the importance of the meaning of life and the effort to survive in difficult situations and if possible, to get out of this predicament. This research becomes very important in regard to how the reading of the Bhagavad-gītā religious text has a positive impact for the readers and is beneficial during the crisis situation. This will provide good motivation, where modern people who are very materialistic want a real benefit from the activities they conduct.

2. Research Methods

Participants in this study amounted to 100 subjects who were determined through *purposive sampling* technique. The criteria for the research subjects are to have experience reading Bhagavad-gītā at least one year, between the age 20-55 years and reside in Bali.. The data collection process was carried out from June to August 2020 by means of google form. The method used is quantitative with data collection using questionnaire in the form of a Likert scale. The research instrument used in this study to determine the resilience of the subject was the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale 10 (CD-RISC 10) which was developed by Connor & Davidson (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

This questionnaire consists of 10 items with four answer choices, they are *never*, *rarely*, *often* and *always*. Based on the manual guideline of the questionnaire, it was stated that the total score of CD-RISC 10 was 40. This scale also has a satisfactory reliability value with a Cronbach alpha of

0.87 (Connor & Davidson, 2003). In order to determine coping strategy, researchers used a scale based on aspects of *Problem focused coping* and *Emotion focused coping* with reliability value of 0.6.. The hypothesis testing using analysis of covariance or ANCOVA. ANCOVA is a statistical analysis technique that combines ANOVA with regression analysis (Gunawan, 2016). The entire data processing is carried out by the mean of a data processing application.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Hypothesis Testing

Based on the table 1 of covariance analysis or ANCOVA, it shows that the significance value in the *corrected model* is 0.000. This value indicates the simultaneous role of all independent variables on the dependent variable. The value obtained is smaller than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), so that all independent variables have a simultaneous role on the dependent variable. In other words, the result obtained is that the motive for reading Bhagavad-gītā and the frequency in reading Bhagavad-gītā together contribute to the resilience of Bhagavad-gītā readers during the covid-19 pandemic.. The *adjusted R*

squared value when controlling for the motive variable is 0.415. This means that the resilience variable can be explained by the motive and frequency variables of 41.5%. However, when no control is carried out on the motive variable, the *adjusted R squared* value changes to 0.163. This means that the resilience variable can be described by the frequency variable of 16.3%. An increase of 25.2% after controlling for the motive variable indicates that the model becomes better and the role of motive is greater than frequency.

This study specifically wants to find out how the experience of reading Bhagavad-gītā affects the resilience ability and the choice of appropriate coping strategy during the covid-19 pandemic. Based on the table of covariance analysis or ANCOVA, it shows that reading motives and frequency in reading Bhagavad-gītā together play a role in resilience during the covid-19 pandemic (the significance value in the *corrected model* is 0.000). The *adjusted R squared* value when controlling for the motive variable is carried out is 0.415. This means that the resilience variable can be explained by the motive and frequency variables of 41.5%.

Table. 1 Covariance Analysis Results

Dependent Variable: Resilience

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1071.399 ^a	3	357.133	24.379	.000
Intercept	1551.697	1	1551.697	105.925	.000
Motif	625.023	1	625.023	42.666	.000
Frekwensi	504.589	2	252.295	17.223	.000
Error	1406.311	96	14.649		
Total	103411.000	100			
Corrected Total	2477.710	99			

a. R Squared = .432 (Adjusted R Squared = .415)

3.2 Impact of Bhagavad-gītā Literacy on Resilience and Coping Strategy

The resilience of Bhagavad-gītā readers is more dominantly explained from the variable of motive and reading frequency with a value of 41.5%. This indicates that the awareness of the benefits of reading the Sacred Scripture Bhagavad-gītā has a greater impact than just carrying out religious obligations or being encouraged by others. The experience of Bhagavad-gītā readers also influences the choice of coping strategies in dealing with problems where as many as 79% of the readers choose to use *problem focus coping* and the remaining 21% use *emotion focused coping*. *Problem-focused coping* is said to work better than *emotion-focused coping* because *problem-focused coping* emphasizes more on the way individuals deal with pressure or problems by finding solutions so that they can help themselves to improve their skills or finding new ways to change the situation or the problems they encounter (Santrock, 2010). Resilience also has a significant correlation with the choice of adaptive coping strategy as indicated by a sig value (2-tailed) of 0.001 < 0.05. The correlation between the two variables also has a positive value, which means that the higher the resilience value, the more adaptive the choice of coping strategies for the readers of Bhagavad-gītā will be.

This study shows that reading Bhagavad-gītā has a strong correlation with the resilience of the subject. The motive for reading Bhagavad-gītā which is purely from self-determination shows better resilience ability compared to other motives, such as being ordered by the closest people and reading only for a religious obligation purpose. These results are in accordance with the research conducted by Lolla (Lolla,

2020) that the relevance of Bhagavad-gītā for thousands of years is unquestionable, however understanding the teachings in it to be a person's need, does not come naturally, therefore the mentoring process in learning Bhagavad-gītā for children and adolescents is needed so that the learning process will become a necessity until they understand that Bhagavad-gītā has a tremendous impact on life. Apart from motives, the amount of time spent/persistence in reading Bhagavad-gītā also has an influence on one's resilience ability. Resilience correlated with the word Sthītaprajña is an important goal of the Bhagavad-gītā (Tilak, 1924). The oldest Bhagavad-gītā commentator inherited to date, Sankara defines Sthītaprajña as a stable wisdom that one acquires as a result of practicing yoga (Sharma, 1997). (Sharma, 1997). Saṅkarācārya describes it as a mental state that a person has as a result of the practice in his life (Warrier, 1983). Another frequently used word equivalent to this condition is also referred to as anasakti. Anasakti was found to represent one aspect of the human personality that helps individuals remain well adjusted and healthy despite exposure to stress (Pande & Naidu, 1992). The concept of Sthītaprajña profoundly discussed in Adhyaya II is called Sāṅkhyayoga (Yoga of Sāṅkhya, Discriminative Knowledge). Because of Arjuna's weakness, Kṛṣṇa began to teach Arjuna the right way of thinking and acting as it should be. Firstly, Kṛṣṇa teaches him Sāṅkhyayoga or the Yoga of Discriminatory Knowledge. Bhagavad-gita actually teaches skills in thinking, speaking, acting and doing. This skill is very important in every era, especially in this age of nanotechnology, strictly speaking, the definition of Sthītaprajña is found in the Bhagavad Gītā II. 55, as follows:

śrī bhagavān uvāca
prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha
mano gatān
ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthita
prajñas tadocyate

Bhagavad Gītā II. 55

The Blessed Lord said:

When one wholly discards desires of the heart and becomes exclusively content with the self, one is called a sage of stable wisdom, o Arjuna!

(Warrier, 1983).

This verse teaches sthitaprajña, resilience, inner abilities which in the language of modern psychology are called resilience and coping strategy. Sthitaprajña is our internal resilience, facing joys and sorrows, humiliation, insults as well as praise, luck and misfortune in life. This power is exceptionally needed. When Arjuna despaired and doubted about the war before his eyes, between respect for elders, love for country, throne and wrath, Sri Krishna taught about the resilience of sthitaprajña, which is possessed by those who are spiritually evolved in his life. His style of dress may be ordinary, his speaking style is the same as other people, but his inner strength is measured by how strong he is in dealing with difficulties, confusion and making effort to find the best way out. This ability is extremely important to have in this era.

Both the Sthitaprajña and the Anasakti doctrines offer excellent ways of dealing with the distress or discomfort which is

a part of human life. The relevance of Bhagavad-gītā's teachings and basic values are especially relevant in the time of the covid-19 pandemic, where people need resilience and good ability to make decisions. Right decisions are needed especially at these unexpected times. This is also in accordance with the statement (Kalra et al., 2020), the relevance of Bhagavad-gītā is seen during covid-19 pandemic where the battlefield becomes very real and there are many limitations and problems that cause disappointment. Therefore, everyone should be guided by profound dharma (duties, virtues), in order to survive and get out of this crisis. Everyone can play the role of Arjuna who struggles on the battlefield in the midst of uncertain situations even as Mahābhārata, often overshadowed by defeat and disappointment. In other words, resilience, emotional maturity and efforts to get out of crisis situations that can cause stress to individuals can be seen clearly in Bhagavad-gītā readers who are the subjects of this study.

These results have a correlation with global thinking about the impact of literacy. (Bulajić et al., 2019); (Cambridge Assessment, 2013) states that literacy opens the door to metacognitive and social awareness. In other words, literacy as a social, cognitive act creates several opportunities for strategic thinking and reflection that are absent in convention pedagogy and textual truth. (KadekSurpi, 2021) also emphasized that literacy in Hinduism not only builds intelligent humans but also intellect (able to use right and appropriate considerations) and awareness. (Surpi & Purwadi, 2021) stated that the purpose of learning is to build a literate society, meaning that it is not only able to read but to understand its meaning, able to absorb and develop into

an excellent person based on learning the sacred scripture.

The Efforts to increase literacy are one thing that Hindu scholars in Indonesia have realized. Various efforts have actually been made, although no significant results have been obtained. Even, in 2014 located in Bali a mass Bhagavad-gītā reading activity (recorded in Indonesian Museum of Records-MURI) was held, which was attended by 63,336 people, dominated by the youth. However, empirical data shows that Hindus who regularly read Bhagavad-gītā do not show a number that exceeds 1% of the number of Hindus in Indonesia (Aryadharma, 2019). This may be caused by several things, namely the religious system in Indonesia is more focused on ritual activities and the tradition of reading sacred scripture has not yet been established. In fact, since the time of the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in Nusantara, two books namely Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata are very popular in Indonesia (Surpi, 2020a). However, the learning process to the general public is mostly through play and shadow puppets media. So that the habit of reading, listening to the reading or sacred scripture discussion became an uncommon thing, which eventually carried over until the independence of the Republic of Indonesia. However, President Sukarno, who is a Moslem, admitted that he finished reading Bhagavad-gītā five times and claimed to get inspiration and enthusiasm from this very popular text.

1.3 Readers of Bhagavad Gita have the Resilience and Ability to Get Out of Suffering

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is a clear example of how human life is always overshadowed by suffering. The resilience

in facing difficult situations has been widely taught in Hindu texts. The Vedas mandate humans to be able to survive and have a way out when facing difficult time, whether it is due to a pandemic, war or other suffering. In Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata texts, two famous epics in Hindu Civilization are clearly shown how one has to adapt and remain steadfast in difficult situations. In Rāmāyana story, Rama, Sita and Laksmana have to flee to the forest for 14 years and live in misery. While in Mahābhārata, the five Pandavas have to live in the forest, experience exile as a punishment for being defeat in gambling, for 12 years and live in disguise for 1 year (Surpi, Nyoman, et al., 2021). Hindu literature teaches the ability of resilience when facing difficult times. In Bhagavad-gītā this ability is referred to as sthitaprajña which means steady in wisdom, capable of being balanced in joy and sorrow, having the courage to face difficult situations. Sthitaprajña correlates with knowledge in the field of psychology, namely resilience, where individuals are able to rise and suppress all stressors or negative feelings so that the individual's life activities are not disturbed. Resilience includes personal qualities that enable individuals to rise when facing adversity. In addition, as an ability to overcome pain and transform oneself, or the capacity to maintain the condition (self) in order to function competently in facing various stressors in life (Hendriani, 2018).

The results of this study indicate that Bhagavad-gītā readers actually possess Sthitaprajña, the resilience. Aside from resilience, readers also have the ability to get out of suffering, not complain about the difficulties experienced or just blame the difficult circumstances. Suicide, which is the choice of most people, also does not

occur to the Bhagavad-gītā readers. They prefer to engage in constructive activities to overcome the difficult situation and seek ways to resolve it. In fact, the existence of viruses and pandemics is nothing new in Hindu literature. The Atharvaveda, Mahābhārata and Ayurvedic texts talk about krimi (microbes/pathogens) and how to treat them. This means that since more than 5000 years ago, the presence of the virus has been detected (Surpi, 2020b). The COVID-19 pandemic is a clear example of how humans should always be vigilant and have high abilities in dealing with situations of suffering (crisis, unpleasantness) and the ability to find solutions. People who have balance and the ability to make the right decisions are possible to be able to survive and get out of crisis situations.

4. Conclusion

This study reveals the resilience ability and coping strategy of Bhagavad-gītā readers during the covid-19 pandemic by involving independent variables such as motives and frequency of reading Bhagavad-gītā. The results showed that Bhagavad-gītā literacy in terms of motives and reading frequency had a role in resilience ability and the

choice of adaptive coping strategy. Reading motives and frequency of reading together play a role in the resilience of Bhagavad-gītā readers during the covid-19 pandemic. The resilience variable can be explained by the motive and frequency variable of 41.5%. As many as 79% of Bhagavad-gītā readers choose to use *problem focus coping* when dealing with difficult problems or situations during the covid-19 pandemic. In other words, Bhagavad-gītā readers have high resilience which is influenced by motives and frequency in reading and have emotional maturity in the form of the ability to find solutions for the crisis they are facing. This is evidence that Vedic literacy has a positive impact on its readers, namely having high resilience ability and good coping strategy. This means that Bhagavad Gita readers have the resilience and ability to get out of suffering. This is in accordance with the important purpose of reading Bhagavad-gītā, namely the awakening of the Sthītaprajña in the form of resilience, steadfastness and equanimity. Thus, it can be concluded that Bhagavad-gītā literacy exerts a strong influence on endurance and the ability to survive in the midst of crises and find a way out of suffering.

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