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COPING WITH REPRESSION: STRESS AND RESILIENCE AMONG ADULTS DURING THE AUGUST 2025 DEMONSTRATIONS

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Abstract. This study aims to examine the relationship between stress coping and resilience among early adults following repressive actions by authorities during the August 2025 demonstration wave. The study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design. Participants comprise 120 early adults aged 18–25 years who directly experienced repressive actions by authorities during the August 2025 demonstrations. Data were collected using a Resilience Scale based on Reivich and Shatté's aspects and a Stress Coping Scale based on Lazarus and Folkman's theory. Simple linear regression analyses conducted separately indicate that the Problem-Focused Coping (PFC) dimension is positively and significantly related to resilience ($\beta = 0.763$; $p < 0.001$), with an effective contribution of 58.2% ($R^2 = 0.582$). The Emotion-Focused Coping (EFC) dimension is also positively and significantly related to resilience ($\beta = 0.412$; $p < 0.001$), with an effective contribution of 17.0% ($R^2 = 0.170$). Frequency distribution indicates that the majority of respondents exhibit high (60.8%) and moderate (32.5%) levels of resilience. Regarding coping strategy use, 55.0% of respondents predominantly employ EFC, while 45.0% predominantly employ PFC. These findings suggest that although emotion regulation (emotion-focused) constitutes the most dominant initial response following trauma, solution-oriented active strategies (problem-focused) serve as the primary determinant in building resilience among early adults. This study reinforces the role of stress coping as a protective factor supporting the psychological recovery process in victims of socio-political trauma.

Keywords: Demonstration; Early Adulthood; Resilience; Stress Coping; Repressive Actions by Authorities

1 Introduction

Early adults constitute a productive cohort expected to exercise their constitutional right to express opinions in public spheres. This right is guaranteed under Article 28E of the 1945 Constitution and Law No. 9 of 1998. Nevertheless, the handling of the August 2025 demonstrations was marked by repressive actions by authorities. The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI) recorded ten fatalities and more than 3,000 arrests accompanied by torture, restrictions on information access, and prohibition of media coverage (YLBHI, 2025). The Ministry of Home Affairs also recorded demonstrations across 107 locations in 32 provinces since 25 August 2025, some of which escalated into riots and fatalities (Roshali, 2025). Consequently, the event attracted international attention, ranging from Time and Reuters to OHCHR, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch (Time, 2025; Reuters, 2025; OHCHR, 2025; Amnesty International, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2025). Domestically, the Median Survey found that the 21–30 age group exhibited the highest support for the continuation of demonstrations, at 38.9%, while 85.1% of respondents were aware of violence during the protests (Median, 2025). These findings indicate that early adults are not merely participants but also the cohort most exposed to psychological risks. Moreover, early adults are situated within a transitional phase toward autonomy and identity formation, rendering them more susceptible to the psychological impact of traumatic events (Santrock et al., 2019): Papalia & Martorell, 2021).

Such vulnerability has been empirically substantiated. (Ni et al., 2020) reported a PTSD prevalence of 40–41% and severe depression of 7% among victims of community violence. In parallel, (Lai et al., 2023) demonstrated that resilience mitigates the risk of depression and PTSD among individuals exposed to social violence. Within the Indonesian context, (Shabrina, F. N., et al, 2021) found that psychological distress functioned as a partial mediator in the relationship between resilience and well-being, whereas (Alfa Wijianti & Purwaningtyas, 2021)identified a significant correlation between stress coping and resilience ($r = 0.463$; $p < 0.05$). A comparable pattern emerged from preliminary interviews with four early adult victims, namely NL, DL, JA, and TM, who experienced anxiety, avoidance, and a diminished sense of safety in public spaces (Jannah, 2025). These repercussions extend beyond the individual level, as diminished resilience potentially impairs social functioning and productivity ((Ahmad & Sajit, 2024);(Edelman, 2023); (Occhipinti et al., 2023)). Therefore, strengthening resilience constitutes an urgent necessity for victim recovery.

Resilience itself is shaped by internal (I Am), external (I Have), and skill-based (I Can) factors (Grotberg in Ramadhani, 2024), as well as protective factors such as social support, coping skills, self-regulation, and adaptability (Masten, 2015). Among these factors, stress coping occupies a strategic position as both a protective factor and an I Can skill. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping posits that coping constitutes an individual's active mechanism for managing environmental demands (Richard S. Lazarus, 1984). A substantial body of research has documented a positive relationship between stress coping and resilience (Alfa Wijianti & Purwaningtyas, 2021); (Lai et al., 2023); (Yuwono & Yudiarso, 2024), with problem-focused coping contributing more substantially than emotion-focused coping ((Fakhira & Ambarini, 2020);(Budi Ingelina, &Monty P. Satiadarma, 2024)).

Nevertheless, studies on stress coping and resilience have predominantly focused on academic contexts, quarter-life crises, and natural disasters. In contrast, repressive actions possess distinctive trauma characteristics, as they involve fear of institutions and a loss of control over the social environment (Ifan et al., 2025). Consequently, research on victims of repressive actions during demonstrations, particularly early adults, remains scarce.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines the relationship between stress coping and resilience among early adults following repressive actions by authorities during the August 2025 demonstration wave.

2 Literature Review

Resilience is conceptualised as an individual's capacity to adapt positively when confronting pressure, adversity, or traumatic events. Ramadhani (2025) defines it as the quality of an individual's ability to confront adversity and thereby return to their prior state. This definition underscores that resilience entails not merely survival but also the capacity to rebound, adjust, and develop new strengths following challenging circumstances. Accordingly, resilience plays a pivotal role in enabling individuals to maintain psychological well-being and adaptive functioning in daily life.

If resilience represents an adaptive capacity, stress coping constitutes the antecedent process. (Yafi & Noor, 2025)) describe stress coping as the strategies individuals employ when encountering adversity or discomfort, such as stress, anxiety, or depression. Through these strategies, individuals endeavour to soothe themselves, regulate emotions, and seek solutions so that the perceived pressure does not engender greater negative consequences, whether mental or physical. In other words, stress coping functions as an initial mechanism bridging the individual and the pressure-laden situation.

Within the context of this study, such pressure originates from repressive actions by authorities. (Firmansyah, 2023) characterises repressive action as a form of power suppression exercised by authorities against society in the interest of controlling situations that potentially violate civil rights. Such actions engender broad consequences encompassing physical, psychological, social, and political dimensions. Their impact is not confined to demonstrators directly but also shapes public perception and influences the state's legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

These psychological consequences particularly affect cohorts situated within specific developmental phases, one of which is early adulthood. Early adulthood constitutes the developmental stage following adolescence, generally commencing at approximately 18–25 years of age (Santrock, 2021). This phase serves as a crucial foundation for the formation of emotional, social, and moral maturity. During this period, individuals begin to assume full control over their lives through responsibility, autonomy, and the capacity to integrate personal values with social demands (Santrock, 2021). Accordingly, early adulthood may be regarded as a strategic stage that substantially contributes to identity formation and the stability of adult life.

From the foregoing exposition, stress coping and resilience constitute two psychological constructs that are closely interrelated in assisting individuals to adapt to life's pressures. Stress coping functions as an initial mechanism when individuals attempt to manage demands or pressures exceeding their capacity, while resilience emerges as the outcome of that process. Thus, the two do not operate independently but rather function sequentially and mutually reinforce one another in confronting traumatic situations.

3 Method

3.1 Design and Participants

This study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between stress coping and resilience based on numerical data analysed statistically (Sugiyono, 2019). The correlational method is utilised to elucidate the degree of association between the two variables while simultaneously predicting the relationship empirically. Participants comprise 120 early adults aged 18–25 years who were directly involved as active participants in the August 2025 demonstrations in Indonesia and who experienced at least one form of repressive action by authorities. Four inclusion criteria were applied: (1) being within the early adulthood age range of 18–25 years; (2) being directly involved as an active participant in the August 2025 demonstrations across various regions of Indonesia; (3) experiencing at least one form of repressive action, namely direct physical contact (pushing, hitting, kicking, stepping on, dragging), exposure to riot-control devices (tear gas, rubber bullets, electric shocks), arrest or detention without clear justification, verbal threats or intimidation, or forced dispersal; and (4) not serving as a media team member or medical volunteer during the demonstrations. The population in this study is infinite, as the exact number of victims remains unknown and is dispersed across multiple regions..

3.2 Sampling

Sampling was conducted using a non-probability sampling technique in the form of convenience sampling, supplemented by snowball sampling. This technique was selected because the population is infinite, leading the researcher to utilise the availability and accessibility of participants meeting the inclusion criteria. The questionnaire was distributed through several channels: (1) organisational networks, in coordination with student organisations, legal aid institutions, and non-governmental organisations assisting demonstration victims; (2) social media and online forums, including X/Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and relevant WhatsApp groups; and (3) snowball sampling, wherein participants who had completed the questionnaire were requested to disseminate the link to colleagues who also met the research criteria. The minimum sample size was calculated using Cochran's (1977) formula for infinite populations with continuous data, referring to recommendations by Bartlett (2001) and Krejcie and Morgan (1970). With a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$; $Z = 1.96$), a 3% margin of error for continuous data, and an estimated standard deviation of 0.667 based on a 4-point Likert scale, the minimum sample size obtained was $n_0 = 118.68$, rounded to 119 respondents. A total of 120 respondents were successfully recruited, exceeding the minimum threshold.

3.3 Instruments

Data were collected using a Likert scale with four response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The neutral option was excluded to avoid central tendency or midpoint responses among research subjects (Supraktiknya, 2014). Resilience was measured using a Resilience Scale developed based on the seven aspects proposed by Reivich and Shatté (2002), namely emotion regulation, impulse control, optimism, causal analysis, empathy, self-efficacy, and reaching out. The scale comprises 50 valid items with reliability coefficients of $\alpha = 0.803$ in the original study and $\alpha = 0.925$ in the present study. Stress coping was measured using a Stress Coping Scale developed based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory, encompassing two principal dimensions: Problem-Focused Coping (PFC) and Emotion-Focused Coping (EFC). The scale comprises 52 valid items with reliability coefficients of $\alpha = 0.919$ in the original study and $\alpha = 0.658$ in the present study.

3.4 Procedure

Data collection was conducted through an online survey using Google Form. The procedure commenced with an explanation of the study and informed consent, followed by the

completion of demographic data and demonstration involvement. Subsequently, participants completed the Resilience Scale (50 items) and the Stress Coping Scale (52 items) using a 4-point Likert scale, with clear instructions provided for each section. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no compensation, reward, or incentive was provided in any form. All data were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Participants retained the right to decline or withdraw at any time without consequence. The researcher also anticipated potential psychological risks by providing information regarding psychological referral services for participants experiencing post-participation distress.

3.4 Analisis Data

Data analysis was performed with the assistance of SPSS software. The initial stage encompassed data completeness checks and scoring of each response. Assumption testing comprised a normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test and a linearity test using ANOVA. The normality test indicated that residuals were not normally distributed ($p < 0.05$), whereas the linearity test demonstrated a significant linear relationship between resilience and stress coping ($F = 140.085$; $p < 0.001$). Despite the violation of the normality assumption, simple linear regression analysis was nonetheless conducted, referring to Katz (2011), who posits that data with a sample size exceeding 100 respondents may be assumed to approximate a normal distribution. Hypothesis testing was conducted through simple linear regression to ascertain the direction, significance, and magnitude of the contribution of each stress coping dimension to resilience. The decision criterion was based on a significance value of $p < 0.05$ (Sugiyono, 2019).

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Description of Research Subjects and Data Categorisation

This study utilised data obtained through questionnaire distribution to 120 respondents. Regarding gender, respondents comprised 61 males (50.8%) and 59 females (49.2%). This distribution indicates a relatively balanced proportion between male and female respondents.

Regarding location, respondents originated from nine cities: Bandung, Jakarta, Jember, Kediri, Makassar, Malang, Solo, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta. The largest proportion of respondents originated from Malang, comprising 26 individuals (21.7%), followed by Jakarta with 21 individuals (17.5%) and Surabaya with 19 individuals (15.8%). Conversely, the smallest proportion originated from Jember, comprising 1 individual (0.8%). This distribution indicates that research respondents were dispersed across various cities with differing proportions.

Data categorisation was subsequently conducted based on research variables, taking into account mean and standard deviation (SD) values. The hypothetical score for the resilience variable has a minimum of 50, maximum of 200, mean of 125, and SD of 8. Meanwhile, the overall stress coping variable has a minimum score of 52, maximum of 208, mean of 130, and SD of 9. Regarding stress coping dimensions, EFC has a minimum score of 33, maximum of 132, mean of 83, and SD of 6, whereas PFC has a minimum score of 19, maximum of 76, mean of 48, and SD of 3.

Categorisation results indicate that the majority of respondents exhibit high levels of resilience. A total of 73 respondents (60.8%) fall within the high category, 39 respondents (32.5%) within the moderate category, and 8 respondents (6.7%) within the low category. Accordingly, the majority of early adult respondents following repressive actions by authorities demonstrate high levels of resilience, reflecting relatively favourable adaptive and psychological recovery capacities.

Regarding the stress coping variable, based on comparison of standard scores (z-scores) between the Problem-Focused Coping (PFC) and Emotion-Focused Coping (EFC) dimensions, 66 respondents (55.0%) predominantly employ EFC strategies, whereas 54 respondents (45.0%) predominantly employ PFC strategies. These results indicate that the majority of respondents tend to employ strategies focused on maintaining emotional conditions when confronting pressure stemming from repressive events. This condition is understandable, as repressive experiences are traumatic in nature and situations are largely beyond individual control, rendering emotion regulation a more readily accessible coping strategy during the initial post-trauma phase (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Based on descriptive statistics and instrument reliability, the reliability of the resilience instrument ($\alpha = 0.925$) exceeds that of the previous study ($\alpha = 0.803$), indicating excellent consistency. Conversely, the reliability of stress coping ($\alpha = 0.658$) declined from its previous value ($\alpha = 0.919$).

4.2 Results.

4.2.1 Assumption Testing

a. Normality Test.

The normality test was conducted to verify whether the variable data in this study were normally distributed. This test employed the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test on unstandardised residuals..

Table 1. Normality Test

Variabel	*P*(sig.)	Keterangan
Resiliensi	0,00	Not Normally Distributed
Koping Stres	0,00	Not Normally Distributed

Based on the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test results, a significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.001 was obtained. As this significance value is less than 0.05, it may be concluded that residuals are not normally distributed. Accordingly, the normality assumption in this study is not satisfied, necessitating the use of non-parametric analysis methods or data transformation prior to further testing requiring normality assumptions.

b. Linearity Test

The linearity test was conducted to examine whether the relationship between resilience and stress coping variables is linear. This test employed linearity testing within ANOVA, with the criterion that a relationship is deemed linear if the significance value (Sig.) of the linearity test is less than 0.05.

Table 2. Linearity Test

Variabel	F	*P*(sig.)	Keterangan
Resiliensi dan Koping Stres	140,0	0,000	Linear

Based on the analysis results, an F linearity value of 140.085 was obtained with Sig. = 0.000. As the significance value is less than 0.05, it may be concluded that a significant linear relationship exists between resilience and stress coping variables. Accordingly, the linearity assumption is satisfied and linear regression analysis may proceed.

4.2.2 Simple Linear Regression Test

Hypothesis testing in this study employed linear regression analysis to ascertain the relationship between the independent variable (stress coping) and the dependent variable (resilience). Nursiyono and Nadeak (2016) assert that regression serves to examine causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. A relationship is deemed significant if $p < 0.05$, whereas if $p > 0.05$, no significant relationship exists (Sugiyono, 2019). Regression testing requires the fulfilment of classical assumption tests, namely the satisfaction of normality and linearity requirements. Although initial test results indicate that data in this study are not normally distributed and linear, regression analysis may nonetheless proceed. This refers to Katz's (2011) position that data may be assumed to be normally distributed when the sample size exceeds 100 respondents, whereas this study involves 120 respondents.

Table 3. Regression Test of PFC and Resilience

Variable	B	β	SE	t	P (sig)
Konstanta	30,703	-	8,796	8,796	0,001
PFC	2,063	0,763	0,161	12,806	0.000
R^2	0.582				
F	164,001				0.000

Based on the first simple linear regression analysis results, the Problem-Focused Coping (PFC) dimension variable is demonstrated to have a positive and significant relationship with resilience ($\beta = 0.763$, $p < 0.001$). Each one-point increase in the PFC score increases resilience by 2.063 points. PFC is capable of explaining 58.2% of the variance in resilience ($R^2 = 0.582$), with a statistically significant model ($F = 164.001$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 4. Regression Test of EFC and Resilience

Variable	B	β	SE	t	P (sig)
Konstanta	-15,501	-	32,182	-0,482	0,631
EFC	1,856	0,412	0,378	4,908	0.000
R^2	0,170				
F	24,087				0.000

Meanwhile, the second simple linear regression analysis results demonstrate that the Emotion-Focused Coping (EFC) dimension also has a positive and significant relationship with resilience ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$). Each one-point increase in the EFC score increases resilience by 1.856 points. EFC is capable of explaining 17.0% of the variance in resilience ($R^2 = 0.170$), with a statistically significant model ($F = 24.087$, $p < 0.001$).

Overall, both stress coping dimensions are demonstrated to exert positive and significant effects on resilience. However, PFC exhibits a substantially greater contribution ($R^2 = 0.582$) compared to EFC ($R^2 = 0.170$), confirming that the capacity to actively confront sources of stress constitutes the most determinant coping mechanism in building resilience among early adults following repressive actions by authorities.

4.3 Discussion

Data testing revealed that stress coping is positively and significantly related to resilience in early adults following repressive actions by authorities during the August 2025 demonstrations. The better the PFC and EFC abilities, the higher the resilience. This finding is consistent with research on academic pressure (Alfa Wijianti & Purwaningtyas, 2021) and general psychological resilience (Yuwono & Yudiarso, 2024).

The increase in resilience from the pre-study (October 2025) to the main study (February 2026) is related to a five-month time interval. Resilience is dynamic and influenced by self-efficacy, social support, and self-compassion (Sulistyowati et al., 2024). Respondents had passed the initial critical phase and processed traumatic experiences cognitively and emotionally, so the difference in scores reflects the dynamics of post-trauma recovery.

The gender distribution was relatively balanced. Male participation in mental health research is generally lower due to stigma and masculine norms (Borg & Sinanidou, 2024), but increases in non-clinical and community-based research (Rice et al., 2018). The proportion of young adults in Indonesia by gender is also relatively balanced (Sa'adah et al., 2024), indicating that the impact of political trauma due to state violence is cross-gender (Sibbald et al., 2025).

Most respondents had high and moderate resilience. In coping with stress, 55.0% predominantly used EFC and 45.0% PFC. The dominance of EFC indicates a tendency to manage emotional conditions first because repressive actions are traumatic events largely beyond individual control. However, PFC contributed more to resilience ($R^2 = 0.582$) compared to EFC ($R^2 = 0.170$), consistent with Fakhira and Ambarini (2020) and Ingelina et al. (2024) regarding the importance of active and solution-oriented coping strategies. EFC still plays a role as the initial foundation of recovery, and the balance of both reflects adaptive coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Reivich & Shatté, 2002).

The dominance of PFC is related to social support and personality as coping factors (Mashudi in Mite, 2023). Respondents came from organizational networks, Legal Aid Institutions, and victim companion communities that provide emotional, informational, and instrumental support (Priyanggasari, 2016). Hardiness, optimism, and cognitive development in early adulthood also encourage active coping (Safira & Saputra in Mite, 2023). Independence, social responsibility, and identity formation (Santrock in Papalia & Martorell, 2021) enable individuals to direct coping toward problem-solving, in line with the I Have, I Am, I Can resilience factors (Grotberg in Ramadhani, 2024) and the role of self-compassion (Sulistyowati et al., 2024).

This relationship is explained through the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which views individuals as actively appraising stressful situations and selecting coping strategies. PFC has been proven to help maintain the psychological balance of victims of state violence (Ni et al., 2020). Success in coping with pressure encourages positive adaptation that manifests as resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

The novelty of this research is examining the relationship between stress coping and resilience in victims of state violence in actual political events and enriching evidence on psychological adaptation in collective trauma (Lai et al., 2023). Theoretically, this research strengthens the application of the transactional stress model in the context of political trauma in Indonesia.

Limitations include the cross-sectional design that does not allow causal conclusions (Creswell, 2014), convenience and snowball sampling that may cause bias, the reliability of the coping scale that decreased compared to Mite (2023), respondents who withdrew for security reasons and concerns about retraumatization (Edelman, 2022), and variations in recovery duration between individuals that were not strictly controlled.

5 Conlusion

Based on the research results and discussion, it may be concluded that a positive and significant relationship exists between stress coping and resilience among early adults following repressive actions by authorities, implying that the better an individual's stress coping capacity, the higher their level of resilience. Among the 120 respondents, the majority predominantly employed problem-focused coping (PFC) rather than emotion-focused coping (EFC), rendering active and solution-oriented strategies the principal key in building psychological resilience. This finding simultaneously reinforces the application of the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping within the context of political trauma in Indonesia, which has hitherto been infrequently examined. Nevertheless, the limitations of cross-sectional design, sampling technique, and instrument reliability warrant acknowledgement, such that generalisation of results must be conducted with caution. Therefore, further research employing a mixed-methods approach is essential to comprehensively understand the dynamics of psychological recovery among populations of state violence victims.

Respondents are advised to progressively apply stress coping strategies. This may be accomplished by habituating positive thinking when confronting problems, regulating emotions through calming activities such as brief rest or engaging in preferred activities, and treating previous experiences as learning opportunities for confronting similar situations. Furthermore, respondents are encouraged to readily seek support from family, friends, or trusted communities, accept input and assistance when necessary, and cultivate a social environment providing positive support. These straightforward measures are expected to assist respondents in developing more adaptive stress coping and enhancing resilience.

Future researchers are advised to employ a mixed-methods design to obtain holistic understanding, given that this study was exclusively quantitative cross-sectional. Stress coping and resilience instruments require adaptation or redevelopment to render them contextual to political trauma. Employing purposive sampling techniques through safe victim assistance networks is necessary to obtain a more representative sample. Longitudinal designs are also recommended to examine causal relationships between stress coping and resilience. Ethical considerations within vulnerable populations must be observed, including considering psychological referral services for respondents following participation

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Appendix

If any, the appendix should appear directly after the references without numbering, and not on a new page