

"Compassion in The Process of Recovering Traffic Victims: A Qualitative Study on Road Traffic Accident Experience"

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Abstract:

Traffic accidents cause victims to suffer minor injuries or physical disabilities and even death. Traffic accidents are unpredictable, but they can have an impact on the health of their victims both physically and psychologically. However, in reality, many victims of traffic accidents receive treatment for physical injuries, with only a small proportion receiving treatment for mental health issues resulting from the accident. This is because traffic accidents are perceived as painful experiences that result in suffering. A person who is suffering from a painful experience may stop when they find meaning behind the experience. This research focuses on finding the meaning and the formation of positive attitudes that vary in each individual who has experienced an accident. The research method used is a qualitative phenomenological approach with a sample selection technique of purposive sampling. Furthermore, data were collected through indepth interviews and observation methods and then the data were processed using descriptive phenomenological methods. The results showed that in dealing with accidents, psychological responses can vary depending on individual conditions and experiences. Self-compassion, social support, condition adjustment, acceptance, and self-care are factors in the recovery process of accident victims. In some cases, accident victims face limitations in daily activities and must adjust to the conditions they experience. Support from family, friends, and self-acceptance are also influential in facilitating a faster recovery.

Keywords: Self Compassion, Traffic Accident Victims, Phenomenology

Introduction:

One of the world's most prevalent health problems is traffic accidents. Traffic accidents increase the mortality rate quite high or if surviving the victim is physically disabled or only slightly injured. Various efforts have been made by the government to reduce fatalities due to accidents by involving the public transport as the first person to witness an accident. Especially for people who live in accident-prone areas. Every year about 1.3 million people die due to traffic accidents and about 20 to

50 million more people suffer non-fatal injuries and many are disabled as a result of accident injuries (WHO, 2022). Most of the victims of traffic accidents are pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. The Ministry of Transportation report shows an increase in the number of road traffic accidents by 3.62% in Indonesia. In 2021 the number of cases reached 103.645 cases, higher than the previous year which was 100.028 cases. The increase in the number of cases is due to the increasing mobility of the community after

previously decreasing due to social restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Traffic accidents are frightening for drivers and passengers of vehicles on the road. Traffic accidents are unpredictable, but they can have an impact on the health of their victims, both physically and psychologically. Physically, the impact can be in the form of temporary or permanent injuries to the victim's body and even disability. Psychologically, traffic accidents can have health impacts, such as trauma, Acute Stress Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and depressive symptoms (Kovacevic et al., 2020; Pozzato et al., 2020). However, in reality, many victims of traffic accidents receive treatment for physical injuries only, and only a small proportion receive treatment for mental health problems due to the accident. This is despite the fact that psychological disorders are relatively common after traffic-related injuries and are predictive of long-term mental health-related outcomes (Kenardy et al. 2018). Psychological consequences are often overlooked due to the primary focus on physical injuries, although research has shown that psychological consequences are caused by traffic crashes can be long-term in which psychological and physical outcomes interact and influence each other (Guest et al., 2018). In general, psychological impacts can affect accident victims whether they have only minor injuries or severe injuries that cause severe bleeding and even loss of limbs.

As previously described, the psychological impact on victims of traffic accidents can develop in victims, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, increased anxiety or depression, acute stress syndrome, phobic travel anxiety, or mood disorders. It was found that the most common psychological consequence of traffic accidents is post trauma (Üzümcüoğlu et al., 2016). Where a person who was previously able to carry out normal activities without obstacles experiences difficulties that make the victim associate the accident as an unpleasant experience and perceive it as a failure. Traffic accidents are likely to cause trauma for victims, as one comes face to face with, and sees first-hand, events that result in death, serious

injury, and threaten the physical integrity of oneself and others. However, not all people who experience traffic accidents develop psychological disorders. Victims who experience accidents in an unconscious state such as a coma experience fewer psychological problems.

Traffic accidents are one of the painful experiences for victims but do not always make a person suffer. A person who suffers from a painful experience can stop when the person finds the meaning behind the painful experience (Frank, 1984). Accident victims usually negatively interpret the events of the accident they experienced, which makes it difficult to understand and accept new realities in their lives. Research has found that people who seek and find meaning from traumatic experiences show lower levels of sadness as well as fewer trauma symptoms compared to people who do not seek and find meaning in the events experienced (Tolstikova, 2003). Self-compassion is one of the positive attitudes that can be formed by victims of traffic accidents to withstand the adverse consequences of the emergence of negative self-assessment of unpleasant situations.

Self-compassion is a form of attitude and behavior to reduce suffering due to individuals experiencing shortcomings, failures, and difficulties (Neff, 2003). Shortcomings, failures, and difficulties lead to negative thoughts and feelings that result in self-suffering. Individuals need to accept and be open to thoughts and feelings due to their shortcomings and failures in order to be able to behave better towards themselves. Through self-compassion, accident victims realize that when they are suffering, they deserve the same kindness from themselves as we do to others who are suffering. Individuals who are able to develop self-compassion in themselves tend to have more positive thoughts related to one's experience, which in turn is related to better emotional outcomes (Wong & Yeung, 2017). Unconditional understanding and caring (self-kindness) make compassionate individuals more likely to accept the conditions experienced.

Accident victims who are able to understand

themselves about the shortcomings, failures or suffering experienced due to accidents so that they do not blame themselves are one of the characteristics of self compassion. Furthermore, the awareness that victims have in viewing difficulties, failures, and challenges as something human and experienced by everyone is also another characteristic. Sometimes, in their psychological development, victims will also be able to see clearly, be able to accept, and face reality without having to judge the accident experienced. Individuals see things as they are, no more, no less in responding to situations in an effective way (Neff, 2009).

There have been many studies on self compassion in traffic accident victims using quantitative methods (Rizaldo, 2021). The results of the study were able to show how self compassion relates to victims of traffic accidents. However, the study was unable to explain the experience of traffic accident victims more deeply to be able to bring up self compassion in themselves. Exercising self compassion allows young adults to be kinder and more accepting of physical limitations and feel grateful for the parts of their bodies that still work (Austin, 2021). In general, in the field of self-compassion, no qualitative research has been found that looks at the experience of self-criticism and self-compassion in victims of traffic accidents. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct the current qualitative study aimed at exploring in what ways accident victims experience self-criticism and the

process of meaning discovery can occur within themselves.

Research Method:

Research Design:

This research uses a method with a qualitative phenomenological approach, which is an approach that describes as accurately as possible about the phenomena experienced by a person according to his life experience (Groenewald, 2004). Qualitative research with a phenomenological approach was used in this study with the aim of finding out about the process of traffic accident survivors interpreting the accident they experienced, the influence of meaning on the survivor's life after the accident and the unique things found related to the accident.

Participants:

This study has four research subjects who have disabilities due to traffic accidents using purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique is to determine the sample by selecting the sample according to the research criteria (Periantalo, 2016). The reason for using this sampling technique is to get a subject that matches the research subject. Subject criteria in this study are (1) individuals who are victims of traffic accidents who experience disabilities, (2) adult age range of 20-60 years, (3) able to communicate verbally, (4) residing in Malang and its surroundings. Participants in this study can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Table of Participants

Participant (Initial)	Gender	Age	Education	Jobs
RA	Women	22 Years	High School	Employee
D	Male	24 Years	High School	Entrepreneur
Z	Women	58 Years	High School	Housewife
FA	Male	28 Years	Bachelor	Employee

Research team:

The study was conducted by a team consisting of a psychology professor and two master's students in professional psychology. The psychology professor who was responsible for the study design, provided methodological guidance, and supervised the entire project. The two master's students played an active role in data collection and initial data analysis under the guidance of the professor.

Procedure:

The data collection method used in-depth interviews that began with open-ended questions first and then the subjects were free to express their answers as long as they did not get out of the research theme. Interviews used audio documents (recordings) as a tool to collect data and notes found in the field. The researcher also attached informed consent to ensure the research was conducted ethically and took into account the rights and obligations of the research subjects. The interview lasted about forty to seventy minutes for each subject in each session. Data collection conducted on the four subjects was almost saturated and quite in-depth.

Data Analysis:

After data were collected from in-depth interviews, data were analyzed using the descriptive phenomenological method. Data analysis was carried out through five stages, namely the first stage of transcribing data and overviewing to understand the data thoroughly. The second stage, compiling descriptions of individual phenomena, where researchers reorganize transcription data and discard irrelevant statements. The third stage was to identify common episodes of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. Then, the fourth stage is to explore the themes in each episode. Finally, the fifth stage is to synthesize an explanation of the themes in each episode.

Results & Discussion:

Based on the data analysis that the researcher conducted, the researcher identified how the victim's response to the impact of the accident experienced and the form of self compassion that arises in accident victims. The following is a table of traffic accident response forms and self compassion that appears in traffic accident victims:

Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4
Response to accidents			
Broken leg below the knee, feeling pain	Unconscious, bruised back of neck & broken shoulder, unable to move	Unconscious, three part leg fracture	Fractured shoulder, sprained shoulder blade, left hand cannot be moved
Sad, traumatized, accepted because previously he had also experienced an accident until he was in a coma for two weeks and lost his memory two months	When you realize you're not received and throwing tantrums with verbal and physical aggression shock, unhappiness, confusion, feeling inferior	Shocked by the condition experienced due to the accident	When she didn't realize, she gets angry and asked to go home

Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4
In What Ways are Traffic Victims Self-Compassionate in the Process of Recovering?			
Condition Adjustment			
Choosing to resign due to foot condition and focus on recovery	Raising ducks because I can't do strenuous activities	Being careful when doing things and not eating carelessly	Take a complete rest
Social Support			
Support from parents and brother	Support from family and friends	Support from neighbors and teachers spiritual	Support from neighbors to seek treatment
Acceptance of Accidental Condition			
Understand the condition and give understanding to yourself by motivating and training yourself to recover.	Accepting the condition after receiving support from family and neighbors	Accept the condition and heed the doctor's advice by taking medicine and milk for recovery	Accepting the condition by resting in order to recover quickly and overcoming negative emotions that arise by hanging out with friends
Questioning why it has to be the subject that experiences until I broke my leg	Not accepting the conditions experienced		
Self Care			
Focus on healing the foot and practicing footwork	Carry out outpatient treatment using the alternative treatment of acupuncture	Obediently follow the doctor's advice by taking the medicine routine	Complete rest and regular health checks and sharing with friends
Common Humanity vs Isolation			

Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4
Viewing accidents as a test from God, it's destiny and the line is like that	Viewing the conditions experienced as trials from God	Viewing the conditions experienced as a test from God makes the subject accept and be grateful for being alive.	Viewing what is experienced as a trial from God and the way it is.
Mindfulness vs Overidentification			
Thinking about and understanding the situation and choosing the best decision for oneself	Realising the condition, optimistic spirit, and motivation to be productive given the responsibility	Reflecting on the condition, sincerely accepting and being grateful to still be given safety	Be more aware by understanding and trying to deal with what can be done for now

Response to accidents:

The accident response carried out by related conditions due to the accident they experienced. Various responses that arise are influenced by the impact of the accident experienced. There are differences in experience in subjects who experience accidents in a conscious and unconscious state. When experiencing an accident, it is known that three of the four subjects were unconscious when the accident occurred. Subjects who were still conscious admitted that they often remembered the accident which was remembered as a bad and sad event, while the subjects who experienced it in an unconscious state were the opposite. Subjects said that because they were unconscious at the time of the accident, they could not remember the incident so that the psychological response appeared when they woke up and saw their condition due to the accident.

Researchers found that the events experienced by the subjects made them bring up emotional responses such as shock, sadness, trauma and tantrums because of the conditions the subjects experienced. B said that, "In the beginning, I still didn't accept my condition, how come it took so

long to heal that I banged my hand and said dirty words" (B6).

In What Ways Are Traffic Victims Self-Compassionate In The Process Of Recovering?

Condition Adjustment

Self-regulation refers to an individual's ability to manage and regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours according to the demands and situations at hand. In the context of self-compassion and adjustment, self-compassion can act as a factor in helping individuals cope with stress, manage negative emotions, and develop healthy adjustment skills.

The average subject who has a fracture has several impacts on the subject's current activities even though the treatment for fractures has been carried out but cannot do normal activities as before the accident so that they adjust to the conditions they experience. As expressed by :

"...the legs were shocked to suddenly be told to work hard, so it still really hurts....I already feel really heavy wanting to resign" (RA31). RA decided to quit his previous job because he felt

unable to carry out his usual duties. She wanted to focus more on healing.

"There are wounds and bruises on the neck until I can't move my hands, so I can't work until now. My activity now is raising ducks..."(D9). D changed his profession from being a factory employee to a duck farming entrepreneur. This is due to physical barriers to movement.

Social Support

Subjects who get social support can help the healing process and develop self compassion. Social support can help in the development of self-compassion because people feel supported and accepted by others, creating an environment that facilitates a caring attitude towards oneself in difficult situations. Social support that comes from family, relatives, and friends motivates to heal and encourages a faster recovery process, as stated by D, "...my friends accept me, so I can accept my weakness too, they support me...for now I am still injured and different from other normal people, for now I am optimistic and enthusiastic to recover" (D16).

"...fortunately I have a family, I have relatives who always support me so my mind is more open" (A27).

Each subject received social support in their healing process. The support of people around, especially families who accompany them in the healing process, makes them feel better and compliant regarding the healing process. Both because of the role of the parents, children help a lot in the post-accident recovery process. Plus the support of close friends, support from their children and the surrounding community who often encourage them to recover. So it can be said that the support of surrounding people such as family plays a big role in the healing process both physically and mentally.

Acceptance of Accidental Condition

In subjects who accept conditions due to accidents, it is a form of self-acceptance. By accepting oneself as it is and feeling sorry for oneself when facing difficulties, one can reduce unhealthy self-pressure

and increase a sense of well-being and inner calm which is a form of self compassion. In accident victims at the beginning of the condition after the accident, some accident victims raised judgements such as questioning the healing that was considered too long.

"...how come it doesn't heal and how come it's like this when it heals..." (D7). However, over time, he was able to accept the conditions he experienced and the support of people around him in the recovery process made him more accepting and understanding of his condition. The subject began to accept and understand his own condition and no longer criticized him for his failures.

"...when I found out about my condition, the treatment would take a long time, so I just tried to understand what else could happen, so whether I want it or not, I accept it ... for now I focus on getting well" (RA9). In victims who experience various conditions due to accidents, they are less able to accept their conditions and more often question the conditions they experience due to accidents until over time they can accept their conditions and think about the next steps in dealing with the conditions due to the accidents they experience.

Self Care

In accident victims after accepting the conditions due to the accident they experienced, they made several efforts to support the recovery process. The efforts made are shown to themselves so that they can accelerate the recovery process.

"...after being discharged from the hospital and controlled several times for now I am still on outpatient treatment, but on alternative..." (D20)

"...I am more careful and pay attention to the doctor's advice not to eat carelessly and take medicine regularly so now I feel better and healthier..." (Z11).

Universal Human Experience

This study illustrates how accident victims view the events and conditions they experience as a common human experience. In this case, they see

what they have experienced as trials/tests from God given to them.

"...I personally see it as a test from God anyway.." (A2)

"...well, accepting what happened, maybe it's God's way" (D21).

"...when I got into the accident, I also accepted it like yes maybe this is His (God's) way, no one knows what else to do, fortunately I was still awake if I didn't get up how would I" (C16-17).

The influence of religious teachings that make the subject can bring up the view of the events experienced as a test from God to His servants. Where every servant will experience a test from God where everyone must experience a test from God which may be in different way and may be heavier than what they have experienced. The religion embraced by the subjects in this study teaches that what happens to its people was a destiny given by God. The perspective that what they experience is a test from God is one way of adapting and conforming to a person in dealing with the experience of accidents at large without feeling that they have suffered more than others and blaming themselves for the events experienced.

Self Understanding and Care

In dealing with the conditions due to the accident experienced by the subject, they provide understanding and care for the current conditions they face. So that they can be effective in dealing with accidents. In this study, the average subject accepted the accident experienced and thought about what to do to deal with it. It can be seen from the way the subject views the accident experienced as something that can be experienced by every human being and can accept it without blaming themselves. The existence of mindfulness is seen as said by D and FAG.

"So I although I am still injured and different from other normal people for now I am optimistic and enthusiastic to heal, heal the wounds from the accident" (D17).

"Yes, just be more aware of myself with the events that occur. It's more like understanding what I'm going through and trying to deal with it or it's already happened and what I can do for now." (FAG22-D23).

Traffic accidents cause a variety of impacts where most of the accident victims cause negative responses such as shock. People who experience traffic accident injuries may experience some limitations in their abilities compared to their condition before the injury. Studies also show that many people may experience significant levels of functional limitations (Russell 2008). Functional limitations in injured people can develop in a variety of areas, including physical functioning, social functioning, mental health, emotional roles, and general health (Aitken, 2007). Traffic accident victims report a range of physiological and psychological problems that affect their quality of life (Franzen, 2006). Some of the psychological responses experienced by victims after an accident include emotional shock and psychological discomfort as an implication of the accident (Pozzato, 2020).

The impact of accidents that make subjects experience limitations is usually in the form of physiological impacts due to injuries from traffic accidents they experience that can hinder activities that support their lives which make them experience difficulties in carrying out them. Any decrease in function experienced by victims can affect the quality of life of patients and become a burden for their families. This in turn can cause psychological distress in patients after an accident. Previous studies have shown that traffic accidents in patients cause several changes and limitations in life routines and a series of negative changes such as limited physical abilities, limited control, changes in family and social roles that demand multidimensional attention in rehabilitation (Fatameh, 2016).

By using healthy coping strategies and supporting themselves with self-compassion, individuals can better cope with change and strengthen their psychological resilience. Coping involves an

individual's ability to face, accept and adjust to a given situation or condition. It can involve mental flexibility, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to adapt to change. Condition adjustment can provide a strong foundation for the development of self compassion (Neff, 2003).

In the healing process in accident victims related to the impact of traffic accidents, it requires the support of the closest people in order to accelerate the healing process. Social support can help individuals feel supported, accepted, and connected to others. This can create an environment that supports the development of self-kindness and understanding of common humanity (Neff, 2003). Therefore, social support received in accident victims can encourage individuals to enjoy life which leads to more positive experiences and feelings of enthusiasm (Wilson, 2020). The existence of social support obtained from others will increase the sense of self compassion within (Jeon, 2016). Social support also contributes to increased attention, empathy (compassion) and maintenance of psychological well-being (Wilson, 2020). Individuals who have good and abundant support will have more kindness and love themselves more (Neff & Mc Gahee, 2010).

Overall, the research subjects at the beginning after the accident tended to have a negative component of self compassion, namely self judgement where at the beginning of knowing their condition they tended to judge, judge, or criticize themselves negatively. However, over time they bring up a positive component of self compassion, namely self kindness. Where they accept the conditions they are experiencing, do not blame or judge themselves for the situation or conditions being experienced, but rather face it with an attitude of understanding, compassion, and tenderness. One practical way to implement self-kindness is self care (Germer, 2009). Self care is a form of attentive and understanding attitude, which is carried out usually in the form of efforts made to meet the needs of the self (Scott, E.2019). Subjects who experience various conditions due to accidents perform various forms of self care as an effort to support the recovery process.

In developing self-compassion in traffic accident victims, there are differences in the process of stages, this may be influenced by differences in the response of accident victims where over time, as in previous studies, accident victims who were injured lost their quality of life but over time the quality of life in victims increased (Rissanen, 2017). Injured accident victims can cause psychological distress. However, the effect of injury on distress decreases over time (Tran et al., 2016). Psychological pressure that decreases over time will certainly trigger differences in the timing of the emergence of self compassion in accident victims. In addition, the severity and handling process of accident victims may also affect the emergence of self compassion in accident victims where previous research shows that the psychological consequence caused by traffic accidents can be long-term, psychological and physical outcomes interact to influence each other in recovery (Gopinath, 2017; HeronDelane, 2013). Sharing the differences in the time span of the accident and the response of accident victims can affect the emergence of self compassion.

Victims of traffic accidents who interpret the events they experience as a test from God. Tests from God or spiritual trials in a religious context can be related to dimensions of self compassion such as self kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. In the face of these trials, self-compassion can provide a useful framework for understanding and managing the experience. In the self kindness dimension, the concept of trials from God can be faced with an attitude of self-compassion. In the common humanity dimension, the concept of trials from God can be viewed as part of the universal human experience. Meanwhile, in the dimension of mindfulness, the concept of trials from God can be the subject of deep reflection and awareness. In many religious traditions, the concept of trials or tests from God is often related to the development of an attitude of humility, fortitude, and dependence on God. In this case, self compassion may involve more acceptance and surrender to God's will, as well as

seeking support and guidance through prayer, worship, or spiritual practices (Sapiro, 2006).

In dealing with the conditions due to the accident experienced by the subject, the subject provides understanding and care for the current conditions they face, the relevant concept developed by the subject is mindfulness. Where in the context of mindfulness, subjects have a deep awareness of themselves, accept the current situation without rejection, and focus on actions that can be taken in dealing with the conditions faced (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). The understanding and care given to oneself regarding the conditions faced can support accident victims in dealing with conditions and various impacts of accidents which are usually accompanied by psychological consequences following traffic accidents can be long-term, psychological and physical outcomes interact to influence each other in recovery (Gopinath, 2017; Heron-Delaney, 2013). By using self-compassion accident victims can be more able and quicker to minimize various psychological consequences of accidents such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, negative emotions, trauma with inward kindness (self kindness), mindfully facing the accident event (common humanity), then accepting it (mindfulness) (Kristin D. Neff & Seppala, 2016).

Conclusion:

The conclusion of this study is that psychological responses after an accident can vary, including shock, sadness, trauma, and anger towards the condition experienced. The healing process involves adjustment to the condition, social support, acceptance of the condition, and self-care. Self-compassion plays a role in helping individuals cope with stress and develop healthy adjustment skills. Social support also plays a role in faster recovery, while self-acceptance and effective self-care aid in the recovery process. It is important to understand that each individual has a unique experience of the accident, and their psychological responses may differ from one another. Therefore, social support and a sensitive approach to self-compassion can help accident victims in their

recovery process and deal with the changes that occur due to the accident.

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