

**AN ANALYSIS OF MUSTAFA'S RESILIENCE TO OVERCOME
ADVERSITY IN LAILA LALAMI'S *THE MOOR'S ACCOUNT***

A GRADUATING PAPER

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A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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**AN ANALYSIS OF MUSTAFA'S RESILIENCE TO OVERCOME
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the theme of slavery in literature through Laila Lalami's historical fiction novel, *The Moor's Account*. This research is focusing on the main character, Mustafa al-Zamori, a 16th-century Enslaved Muslim Moor during early expedition in American. Employing qualitative research to the textual analysis, we aim to analyze Mustafa's resilience using Southwick and Charney's theory. Results show Mustafa exhibits six out of ten resilience factors: optimism, meaning and purpose, religion and spirituality, social support, brain fitness, and cognitive flexibility. These factors serve as coping mechanisms, enabling Mustafa to navigate adversities successfully. The also study highlights the influence of Moor religious and culture in shaping Mustafa's resilience, particularly through his spirituality.

Keywords: Enslaved Moor, Resilience, Adversities

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**ANALISIS RESILIENSI MUSTAFA MENGHADAPI RINTANGAN
DALAM NOVEL *THE MOOR'S ACCOUNT* KARYA LAILA LALAMI**

Oleh: Adib Yudhitama

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengeksplorasi tema perbudakan dalam sastra melalui novel sejarah Laila Lalami, "*The Moor's Account*," yang berfokus pada Mustafa al-Zamori, seorang Muslim Moor abad ke-16 yang diperbudak selama ekspedisi Amerika. Dengan menggunakan penelitian kualitatif pada analisis tekstual, penulis bertujuan untuk menganalisis resiliensi Mustafa menggunakan teori Southwick dan Charney. Hasil menunjukkan Mustafa menunjukkan enam dari sepuluh faktor ketahanan: optimisme, makna dan tujuan, agama dan spiritualitas, dukungan sosial, kebugaran otak, dan fleksibilitas kognitif. Faktor-faktor ini berfungsi sebagai *coping mechanism*, yang memungkinkan Mustafa untuk menavigasi kesulitan dengan baik. Studi ini juga menyoroti pengaruh budaya dan agama Moor dalam membentuk ketahanan Mustafa, khususnya melalui spiritualitasnya.

Kata Kunci: Budak Moor, Resiliensi, *Adversities*

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MOTTO

Impossible is just an opinion.



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Slavery as a historical and social issue has been a recurring theme in literature. Many literary works have examined the complexity of slavery, portraying the perspectives of individuals who survived its difficulties. Slavery refers to the practice in which individuals are considered as property and forced to perform labor against their choice. The narrative revolving slavery also often delve into themes of survival and resilience, highlighting the indomitable human spirit in the face of oppression.

One work of fiction that offers a perspective on the history of slavery is Laila Lalami's historical novel *The Moor's Account*. This novel brings a narrative regarding slavery by presenting the story from the Moor slave perspective. Historically, European refers "Moor" to anyone from Andalusia or North Africa who is Muslim or has a dark complexion. (Bartels, 2008, p. 4), The story in the novel follows the journey of a slave named Mustafa al-Zamori, a Muslim Moor who in the 16th century sailed from his hometown in Maghreb to Sevilla where he was enslaved by his first master. As the story progresses, he is also forced to take part in the expedition to the American continent. Throughout the narrative, Mustafa encounters numerous adversities. Mustafa, as a slave, faces various trials and discrimination because of his status. Not only that, in the American expedition

Mustafa had to survive in such unfamiliar terrain, with food shortages, deadly diseases, and hostile indigenous tribes.

Mustafa's experiences as a Moor slave present an opportunity to explore the specific strategies employed by certain individual or group for survival. As a slave Mustafa has no other choice but to be resilient in facing his status. However, through his perspective as a Moor, he will certainly offer a new and distinct perspective regarding resilience. One of them is the aspect regarding the role of cultural and religious factors in shaping responses to adversity. Understanding how Mustafa draws upon his cultural and religious beliefs to navigate challenges adds a layer of complexity to the narrative, providing a deeper perspective of Moor resilience.

According to M. Southwick and Dennis S. Charney (2018), "resilience itself is an ability to adapt and bounce back in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, or extreme stress" (p. 8). Meanwhile, in another definition, resilience is a psychological concept related to an individual's ability to cope with pressure, trials, and challenges in their lives, as well as recover and grow after experiencing difficulties (Seery et al., 2010, p. 1). While experts define resilience in various ways, one common thread in all definitions is the ability to overcome adversity. According to Southwick and Charney, resilience has 10 factors that can serve as a coping mechanism to help deal with adversity. Among them are fostering optimism, facing fear, having a moral compass, practicing religion and spirituality, having good social support, imitating resilient role models, physical training, actively

maintaining brain fitness, enhancing mental and cognitive flexibility, and finding meaning and purpose in life (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 16).

In short, resilience is the ability to maintain a healthy result in the face of adversity and the ability to bounce back after a traumatic event. An individual is considered to be resilient if they possess and use one of the resilience factors to survive in the face of adversity; they do not have to possess and use all resilience factors to be classified as resilient. That is because resilience factors can be learned one at a time and it does not have to be done all at once because resilience is also dependent on the circumstances. However, does Mustafa possess the factors of resilience that Southwick and Charney suggest as coping mechanism to overcome adversities in his journey as a slave?

In this research, the writer will focus on the application of resilience theory, especially by Southwick and Charney to understand Mustafa's resilience, the main character in Laila Lalami's novel *The Moor's Account*. By utilizing resilience theory in this literary analysis, this research aims to gain a deeper understanding of how he copes and overcomes extreme hardships. Additionally, through the research on Mustafa's resilience, it aims to gain a deeper understanding of the narrative of Moor slave resilience in dealing with the difficulties they had to face during colonialization and slavery. Furthermore, it will also serve to apply the concept of resilience theory within a literary context and contribute to our understanding of how this concept can be applied to the analysis of fictional characters.

1.2 Research Question

- How does Mustafa, as a Moor slave, demonstrate the components of resilience in *The Moor's Account*?

1.3 Objective of Study

This research aims to examine how Mustafa demonstrates the components of resilience, in accordance with the resilience theory proposed by Southwick and Charney. By investigating how Mustafa is adapting and overcoming adversities in his challenging journey, we seek to gain a deeper understanding about the resilience depicted by Moor's individual in facing against adversity and slavery.

1.4 Significance of Study

This research can be used to add information about resilience and the application of resilience theory to literary characters, and can be used as a relevant reference in conducting further research, especially with related topics and theories. This research also offers a new outlook on into the narratives of underrepresented and marginalized individuals through Moor perspective, focusing on their resilience in facing adversity and challenging circumstances.

1.5 Literature Review

The first one is the research which was written by Inda Sri Wahyuni and Desvalini Anwar In his research entitled "Speaking Back to European's Idea of Greatness in *The Moor's Account* (2019) by Laila Lalami" (Wahyuni & Anwar,

2019) This study discusses the concept of Greatness which is displayed by the colonials and the resistance of the main character, Mustafa, with the concept they adopt, namely by speaking back to the European's idea of greatness. This research is closely related to the concept of Orientalism and otherness from Edward W. Said.

The second research is written by Hamid Issafi entitled “The Subaltern’s Prerogative: A Postcolonial Reading of Laila Lalami’s *The Moor’s Account*” (Ishafi, 2019). This study examines postcolonial theory and focuses on 3 angles, the first is historical representation through the slave perspective. The second is the symbolism in the novel. And the third is storytelling as an interpolation of the power relations between master and slave. This research also mentions many postcolonial concepts such as 'hybridity', 'double-colonization', 'subaltern', and 'small narrative'.

The third research is written by Sanaila Ghufran entitled “Laila Lalami's *The Moor's Account*: A Lost Narrative” (Ghufran, 2020). This study discusses about the use of narrative tools in telling the story of Mustafa as a forgotten Muslim slave in the novel. The research also discusses the importance of the role of women in the culture that is displayed in the setting of the story.

The fourth is the research which was written by Esraa al-Sewwi and Yousef Awad, in their research entitled “Illness and the Development of Master-Slave Relations in Morrison's *A Mercy* and Lalami's *The Moor's Account*” (al-Sewwi & Awad, 2020). This study uses a comparison between the novels *The Moor's Account* and *A Mercy*. In both novels, it is specifically investigated about one of the factors that can affect the relationship between Master and Slave, of which is the phenomenon of Illness. With the phenomenon of illness, the relationship between

master and slave can be either closer or more distant. In researching the two novels, Esraa and Yousef used Georg Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic theory.

Some studies from a postcolonial perspective have examined the conflict and how Mustafa had a role in the narrative of postcolonial resistance. From several previous analyses, Mustafa can be seen as a medium of resistance against oppressors. However, by giving Mustafa a new voice and identity, Laila Lalami also shapes Mustafa's character into a complete individual with backgrounds, inner conflicts, and his own decisions. It can be said that Lalami formed Mustafa as a complete individual. In my opinion, Mustafa's inner perspective needs to be investigated. By looking into Mustafa's resilience more deeply, we can see how Mustafa adapt against adversity in his journey. And therefore, providing a deeper understanding of the experiences of enslaved individuals in American history narrative in more detail.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

1.6.1 Resilience

Steven M. Southwick and Dennis S. Charney (2018) describe resilience as the ability to adapt and bounce back in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, or intense stress. (p. 8) Meanwhile, the American Physiological Association defines resilience as the process and result of successfully adapting to harsh or difficult life events, particularly through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adaptability to external and internal stressors (American Psychology Association, 2022). While experts describe resilience in a variety of ways, the ability to

overcome adversity is a common thread in all these definitions (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 8).

Southwick and Charney identified ten factors of resilience as a coping mechanism that can help an individual navigate and adapting to adversities. These resilience factors are typically used by resilient individuals to navigate life's challenges and emerge stronger and more resilient (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 8). They emphasize a variety of key components that contribute to resilience, including optimism, addressing fear, a moral compass, religion and spirituality, social support, resilient role models, physical health, brain fitness, cognitive and emotional flexibility, and meaning and purpose.

- **Optimism**

Optimism is a positive and forward-looking mindset, trust that a current condition can be improved. Optimistic individuals anticipate positive outcomes and believe in their ability to achieve success through their efforts (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 35). This viewpoint implies remaining optimistic and hopeful in the face of adversity. Optimism consists of the idea that obstacles can be overcome and that positive results are possible if individuals are willing to make it happen.

An experiment by psychologist Barbara Fredrickson indicates that negative emotions narrow our focus and actions while remaining optimistic and positive in the face of adversity reduces stress and broadens attention. This capacity to broaden attention enables individuals to step back and view stressful

situations from various perspectives. Thus, optimistic individuals are more adaptable to challenges or in other ways are more resilient. (Fredrickson, 2004)

- **Meaning and Purpose**

According to Southwick and Charney (2018, p. 251), having a clear and meaningful purpose can considerably improve one's resilience. This resilience component is closely tied to developing inner strength and courage, both of which may be beneficial abilities when coping with various difficulties and obstacles in life. Committing fully to a cause with meaning and purpose in the face of hardship not only helps one navigate through difficult times, but it also cultivates individuals with a renewed sense of determination and fortitude to face the challenge.

- **Spirituality and Religion**

Southwick observes that when faced with adversity, individuals frequently turn to religion or spirituality. Many faiths center on the practitioner's relationship with God, who is frequently portrayed as a supreme entity who offers direction, power, and protection (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 110). For some people, their relationship with God strengthens their emotions of inner strength and self-efficacy; knowing that God is on their side gives them the courage to face situations that might otherwise appear too intimidating. (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 127).

Some studies and scientific data indicate the relationship between faith and resilience. For example, in one study of seriously mentally ill patients, more than 80% reported using religion to help deal with their illness, and the majority

believed that their religious beliefs and practices helped to reduce their symptom (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 125).

- **Social Support**

Social interdependence can help to build resilience. When we are stressed or in danger, a close relationship with another person can benefit and aid us (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 136). Strong social ties, according to experts in health psychology and social epidemiology, are associated with a lower prevalence of mental and physical health problems (Eisenberger, 2013). In general, those who have strong and positive social support have better stress tolerance and mental well-being.

- **Moral Compass**

Many resilient people, according to Southwick and Charney, display a fundamental set of moral beliefs. Such principles can assist in developing character and resilience. (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 86). One of the pillars of value system is altruism. Altruism is described as a care for the well-being of others and giving to others without expecting anything in return. (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 85). Brain imaging research in neuroscience has proven that the act of altruism affected the brain's reward centers. For the example, when people donate to a worthwhile cause or charity, the nucleus accumbent lights up, releasing dopamine, which causes a joyful physical sensation, inner warmth, an energy spike, decreased levels of discomfort, and increased well-being (Svoboda, 2013).

- **Cognitive and Emotional Flexibility**

One trait of resilient people is their adaptability in thinking and emotional reactions to adversity. They can use coping methods depending on their circumstances, accepting what cannot be altered while seeking opportunity and significance in adversity (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 226). Acceptance is one example of emotional flexibility. Acceptance acknowledges reality, evaluates modifiable aspects, and redirecting efforts effectively. Acceptance is not resignation, but rather a conscious decision to save energy by not fighting the unchangeable (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 231).

Aside from acceptance, there is another type of cognitive flexibility known as positive cognitive reappraisal. Positive cognitive reappraisal promotes resilience by reducing unpleasant emotions. Positive reappraising is the process of evaluating a traumatic situation from a different viewpoint, whether as less negative and more positive. These shifts in viewpoint modify emotional responses to the incident, resulting in a more adaptive and resilient response (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 237).

- **Brain Fitness**

The term "brain fitness" generally refers to the cognitive and emotional capacities of an individual's brain to adapt and respond effectively to stressors and challenges. In difficult conditions this sharpness enables us to focus on the situation, process information rapidly, recall what we already know about dealing with similar difficulties, find strategies to solve the problem and make wise decisions. These mental and emotional abilities equip us to face

challenges, find solutions, and recover from setbacks – in essence, to be more resilient.

In addition to emphasize how having fit brain helps in handling challenges, Southwick and Charney also emphasize the significance of maintaining brain fitness. As Southwick and Charney (2018, p. 207) highlight in a research by Cathie Hammond (the University of London, 2004), there are numerous ways to develop brain fitness, one of which is via acquiring new skills and information Learning new information and developing new abilities (or, in other words, lifelong learning) was linked to a variety of health outcomes, including well-being, protection and recovery from mental health challenges, and the ability to manage with potentially stressful situations. So, just as we can train our body to become more fit and resilient, the training of brain is also possible and important. The brain has extraordinary abilities to learn. Resilient people tend to be life-long learners, continually seeking opportunities to become more mentally fit.

- **Facing fear**

Facing our anxieties is one of the aspects that might help us become more resilient (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 63). This is due to the fact that fear is unavoidable. Fear may be confining and even paralyzing for some individuals, but when managed correctly, it can be a catalyst for progress.

When we are confronted with anything frightening, we have the impulse to either protect oneself or flee; this is known as the "fight-or-flight" response. Catecholamines (which include adrenaline, norepinephrine, and dopamine)

have a role in mediating the fight-or-flight response. However moderate levels of catecholamines help our brain work well. A modest degree of fear (together with moderate quantities of catecholamines) can actually help you focus and make better judgments. (Southwick and Charney, 2018, p. 63).

- **Physical Training**

Physical exercise, according to Southwick and Charney (2018), can increase mood, cognition, and emotional resilience (p, 175). Exercise helps improve resilience and reduce stress through various brain processes. A number of different neurobiological mechanisms may help to explain the antidepressant, antianxiety, and cognitive-enhancing effects of exercise. For starters, exercise has been proven to boost concentrations of substances known to promote mood (e.g., endorphins) and reduce depression (e.g., serotonin and dopamine). Second, regular physical activity protects us from the negative effects of stress chemicals. When we are stressed, our bodies release cortisol, which may be harmful to our brain. But if we exercise often, our body gets better at managing these hormones, which keeps our brain healthier. (Southwick & Charney, 2018, p. 185)

- **Role model**

Imitation is a strong kind of learning that influences human behavior. Throughout our lives, we learn by imitating the attitudes, beliefs, skills, and patterns of thinking and behavior of others around us, even when we are unconscious of it. According to Southwick and Charney (2018, p. 170), researchers discovered that when individuals examine the behavior of another

person, the observers stimulate many of the same brain regions as the individual being observed. So, by modelling our behavior after a resilient individual can help us become more resilient.

1.7 Method of Research

1.7.1 Type of Research

In this research, the approach utilized in this study is qualitative method. Qualitative research methods do not use statistical measurements and instead focus on interpreting, analyzing, and explaining the phenomena being examined (Boeree, 2005). The use of qualitative methods is consistent with textual analysis, which involves examining and interpreting the meaning of texts to gain insights into the subject under investigation.

1.7.2 Data Sources

The writer uses two data sources which are primary and secondary data. The primary data in this research is a Novel written by Laila Lalami, *The Moor's Account*. As supporting or secondary data sources in this research, the writer uses several books, journals, and articles that relate to *The Moor's Account* and Resilience theory.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

The researcher extracts data from *The Moor's Account*, focusing on intrinsic elements such as characters, characterization, and the plot. This involves an in-depth reading of the novel to comprehend its themes, setting, and character

development. The collected data from this close reading will be subsequently analyzed in the third chapter of the research.

1.7.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis process in this study involves multiple stages. Initially, the researcher proceeds to specifically selecting textual data (lines and paragraphs) that are connected to resilience theory. Following this, the researcher will analyze the scene of adversity and resilience in each scene that has been collected. Next, the data will be systematically categorized into ten resilience factors based on the framework established by Southwick and Charney. Following this, the writer will provide explanations for the data categorized under each resilience factor. In the final step, the research findings will be summarized, and the conclusions are drawn after a thorough analysis of the collected data.

1.8 Paper Organization

This research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the study background, including objective of the study, significance of the study, literature review, theoretical approach, research methodology, and paper organization. The second chapter focuses on the intrinsic elements of the object being analyzed, such as the theme, plot, settings, and characters. The third chapter presents the data analysis and findings of the novel. The fourth and final chapter summarizes the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

4.1 Conclusion

Through the analysis conducted. Mustafa can be concluded as a resilient individual because as the story goes, he can adapt using various kinds of resilience factors. It can be seen that Mustafa has a significant amount of resilience by possessing 6 out of 10 resilience factors throughout the story. These resilient factors served as a coping mechanism, allowing him to successfully navigate hardship. The breakdown of scene that shows resilience factor includes 3 optimism scenes, 1 meaning and purpose scene, 3 religion and spirituality scenes, 3 social supports scenes, 2 brain fitness scenes, and 2 cognitive flexibility scenes.

The depiction of Mustafa's religion and spirituality in the narrative also establishes a profound link between resilience factors and the influence of Moor religious culture. As a Muslim character in the novel, Mustafa exemplifies how religious beliefs consistently serve as a source of solace and inner strength. His reliance on prayer, evident in various scenes, showcases the profound impact of religious practices on his emotional well-being and ability to confront challenges. Mustafa's spirituality is notably depicted during his time in Seville, where the absence of the call to prayer prompts an inner conflict, highlighting the deep connection between his religious rituals and sense of belonging. Furthermore, his prayers for guidance and strength, whether facing the hardships of slavery or navigating in the journey, this act of Mustafa demonstrate a reliance on religion as a coping mechanism during times of distress.

In conclusion, as a moor Mustafa's story underscores the significance of religious or spiritual beliefs as crucial elements in fostering resilience. However, Mustafa also has navigated and survived adversities in his journey through various resilience factors. This resilience is based on Mustafa's optimism to free, the meaning and moral compass behind his suffering, religious and social support, having good brain fitness, and cognitive and emotional flexibility.



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