

# Emotional Expressiveness Among Women Who Experienced Domestic Violence

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional expressiveness is the tendency for individual to show emotion, positive or negative, outwardly. Expressing emotion might help individual to lowering negative affect and pathological symptoms. While, some studies show that women who experienced domestic violence try to hide their experience because it is taboo to talk about in community. Experiencing domestic violence may trigger negative feelings, like sadness, anger, and shame. Previous studies also found that victims likely to have depression and suicidal thought. This study aim to describe the level of emotional expressiveness among 51 women who experienced domestic violence in Indonesia. The method in this research is non-experimental quantitative descriptive method. Measurement of the emotional expressiveness among participants is using the Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES) with good reliability. This study provide acknowledgement that most participants show moderate level of emotional expressiveness and 12% participants tend to hide their emotion outwardly to other people. This study may trigger further study about this topic. Social support and relationship quality may also be considered in studying the emotional expressiveness among participants who experienced domestic violence. Objectivity and specification of the violence type experienced by participants must be considered for further study.

**Keywords:** *Emotion expression, Domestic violence, Emotional expressiveness.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, domestic violence is taboo to talk about to the community. It is also seen as shame for the family that have domestic violence experience. This perspective about domestic violence makes victim choose to stay and live in the abusive relationship rather than open and talk about the violence [1]. Violence against women in Indonesia increases 6% in 2019. National data reported 14.719 violence against women cases in Indonesia and 75% dominated by domestic violence [2]. Domestic violence is violent or aggressive behavior causes physical, psychological, and sexual suffering, including neglecting and manipulating in a domestic setting. Experiencing domestic violence may trigger negatif affect and psychological impacts, such as depression, suicidal ideation, stress, sadness, and suicidal attempt [3].

Expressing emotion may increase positive affect for the individual. While women who experienced domestic

violence may hampered in expressing their emotions, actually negative affection because of victims of domestic violence tends to show lower emotional intelligence that impacts on ability in expressing emotion [4]. Expressing negative emotion may trigger rejection or negative consequences from social. This may impact the increasing of pathological symptom, like posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). While, victim that show or express their emotion tend to report lower PTSD symptom [5]. Previous finding also show that emotional expressiveness may also bring positive impact for women who experienced domestic violence. Individual that express their emotion have ability to share about how they feel and show what they want to others to shape their own life.

Emotional expressiveness is defined by Kring et al. [6] as 'the outward of display of emotion, regardless of valence (positive or negative) or channel (facial, vocal, or gesture). According to the definition, emotional

expressiveness describes dispositional tendency for individuals to show their emotions outwardly.

There is no limitation for individual expressing their emotion but the way individual express their emotion may differ each other. Factors contribute to emotional expressiveness in individual are behavioral expression, verbal disclosure, and comfort to express their emotion [8]. Behavioral expressivity is showing emotion through observable behavior, face expression, posture. Verbal disclosure is showing emotion through verbal communication such as giving information about how they feel to others. This study focuses on behavioral expressivity and verbal disclosure aspect in emotional expressiveness.

Only a few number of study about emotional expressiveness among women who experienced domestic violence in Indonesia. This study aims to describe level of level of emotional expressiveness among women who experienced domestic violence in Indonesia.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Participants

The criteria for participants are women, aged over 20 years, experienced domestic violence committed by partner. There are 51 women that meet the criteria. Demographic data shows that participants are 20-60 years old. 75% of the participants have job; 31% of them have high school educational background; and 57% divorced from their abusive partner. 25% of participants report that they are still in the abusive condition committed by their partner. Participants report that they were abused physically, psychologically, sexually, and financially. Some participants also reporting that they experienced more than one type of violence. Participants divided into online and offline participants. Online participants fill the online questionnaire and recruited from various domicile in Indonesia. While, offline participants fill the offline questionnaire and domiciled in Pangkalpinang. Offline participants were recruited through a informal community in a market that have violence experienced.

### 2.2. Measurement

Data were collected using *Emotional Expressiveness Scale (EES)* by Kring et al. [6] that adopted into Indonesian version. The *cronbach's* alpha coefficient for 16 items is 0.881. Higher score of the total EES score shows the higher emotional expressiveness among participants. While, lower score of the total EES score shows the lower emotional expressiveness among participants.

### 2.3. Research design and procedure

This study is non-experimental quantitative descriptive study. This study aim to describe level of emotional expressiveness among participants. Data were collected using both online and offline questionnaire. Normality data distribution and measurement reliability were also tested in this study

## 3. RESULTS

Result shows that 73.5% participants have moderate level of emotional expressiveness. While, there are 15.7% participants have high level of emotional expressiveness. Participants with high level of emotional expressiveness tend to show their emotion outwardly, feel better if others know about how they feel, can describe their emotion to others. While, data shows 11.8% participants have low level of emotional expressiveness. Low level of emotional expressiveness indicate that participants mind if others know their feeling, keep their feeling for themselves, will not let others know how they feel and suppress their emotion. Tabel 1 describe the number and level of emotional expressiveness among participants.

Participants with perception that they can share their violence experience with family or friends show higher emotional expressiveness ( $F= 0.101$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Participants with master degree educational background show higher level of emotional expressiveness. Participants from offline group that doing offline questionnaire show higher level of emotional expressiveness.

Table 1. Level of emotional expressiveness in participants

Participant's characteristic	<i>mean</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>
Level of emotional expressiveness	<2.00	Low	6
	2.01-3.99	Moderate	37
	>4	High	8
<b>Job Status</b>			
Have no job	2.73	Moderate	13
Have job	3.13	Moderate	38
<b>Marriage</b>			
Married	3.35	Moderate	21
Divorced	2.82	Moderate	30
<b>Educational level</b>			
Elementary school	2.68	Moderate	9
Junior high school	2.64	Moderate	8
Senior high school	2.59	Moderate	16
Bachelor degree	3.44	Moderate	12
Master degree and above	4.40	High	6
<b>Number of children</b>			
0	3.12	Moderate	14
1	3.01	Moderate	22
More than 2	2.97	Moderate	15
<b>Reporting case legally</b>			
yes	3.51	Moderate	11
no	2.89	Moderate	40
<b>Share their experience to other</b>			
yes	3.23	Moderate	35
no	2.58	Moderate	16
<b>Group of participants</b>			
Online	2.73	Moderate	26
offline	3.32	Moderate	25

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Result shows that participants have moderate level of emotional expressiveness. In expressing emotion, individual tend to considerate to whom they show their emotion and how other react to their expression of emotion [9]. Individual who perceive having social support and supportive relationship with others may show their emotion. While, individual that perceive having unsupportive relationship may limit their expression of emotion. Offline participants in Pangkalpinang joined a peer circle of abused women. The community is built by the same experience they have and they share their experience to each other. This situation may become factor that increase the level of emotional expressiveness.

Result also shows that participants with higher educational background also have higher level of emotional expressiveness. This finding support previous study that some victims in Banten, Indonesia with lower level of educational background tend to hide and not reporting their violence experience because they have limited understanding and knowledge about domestic violence and do not know where to report [1]. This may lead to lower level of emotional expressiveness. These findings may bring impact in educational program to consider to educate community about emotional expressiveness and domestic violence from the early educational level.

There are some limitations from this article in studying emotional expressiveness among participants. First, there is no specification about the person to whom victims express their emotion. Women who experienced domestic violence may see their relationship quality with their abusive partner is bad and unsupportive. Future study may consider this factor. According to previous study, individual show their emotion if they feel comfort and supportive relationship with whom they express their emotion.

Second, the limitation is about limited number of participant in representing various cultural background in Indonesia. Emotional expressiveness might be more depends on cultural context. East culture seems more suppress strategy in expressing valence (positive or negative) and channel (verbal or nonverbal) of the emotions. Future study may study more participant with various cultural background to make better generalization of the results.

Third, limitation of this study is about the measurement instrument. Survey method through questionnaire might be misunderstood by the participants because of the language about '*emotion*'. Future study may consider observational method to evaluate emotional expressiveness among women who

experienced domestic violence so it can be more objective.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

This study found that women who experienced domestic violence in Indonesia tend to show their emotions in moderate level. Meanwhile, some victims show low level of emotional expressiveness. This study may trigger more exploration about emotional expressiveness among abused women. By this study, further research may also explore effect by expressing emotion on pathological symptom among the victim.

#### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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