

THE ROLE OF MEDIA EXPOSURE, KNOWLEDGE, FAMILY SUPPORT AND OPTIMISTIC THINKING IN FOSTERING RESILIENCE AMIDST COVID-19

LOW CHOON YU

SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

2025



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DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO QUALIFY FOR A MASTERS IN ARTS
(RESEARCH MODE)

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION
SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

2025



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, thank God, for His blessings throughout my research work to complete the research successfully. I would like to express my deepest appreciations to my supervisor Dr. Kamaruzzaman bin Abdul Manan and Dr Loh Yoke Ling for their continually and convincingly conveyed a spirit of adventure in regard to research, and an excitement in regard to teaching. Without their guidance and persistent help this thesis would not have been possible. Words cannot express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Loh Yoke Ling. Really thanks to Dr. Loh for giving me the opportunity to do research and providing invaluable guidance throughout this research. Her dynamism, vision, sincerity and motivation have deeply inspired me. Dr Kama has taught me the methodology to carry out the research and to present the research works as clearly as possible. It was a great privilege and honour to work and study under his guidance. I am extremely grateful for what he has offered me. I am extremely grateful to my parents for their love, prayers, caring and sacrifices for educating and preparing me for my future. I am very much thankful to my girlfriend for her love, understanding, prayers and continuing support to complete this research work. Also, I express my thanks to my brother and sister for their support and valuable prayers. My Special thanks go to my friend Tan Zhi Xau for the keen interest shown to complete this thesis successfully. I would also like to thank him for his friendship, empathy, and great sense of humor. I am extending my heartfelt thanks to his family for their acceptance and patience during the discussion I had with him on research work and thesis preparation. I am also grateful to my office mates, for their kindness, advise, editing help, late-night feedback sessions and genuine support. Thanks for also always encouraging and challenging me to be resilient, during my shift. Finally, my thanks go to all the people who have supported me to complete the research work directly or indirectly.





ABSTRACT

This study aimed to measure the levels of knowledge, family support, media exposure, optimistic thinking, and resilience in high-risk groups in Malacca, assess the relationships between these factors, and identify the best predictor of resilience. A quantitative research design was employed, with 400 respondents completing a survey. Data were analysed using descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation analysis and Multiple regression analysis. The findings showed that most participants had high levels of knowledge ($M = 4.11$), family support ($M = 4.07$), optimistic thinking ($M = 4.10$), and resilience ($M = 4.14$). Media exposure was also high ($M = 3.91$), indicating its significant role. Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between knowledge, media exposure, optimistic thinking, family support, and resilience. Knowledge emerged as the strongest predictor of resilience, followed by media exposure and optimistic thinking. Family support was not a significant predictor. In conclusion, knowledge play a critical role in strengthening resilience among high-risk groups during health crises. The findings have practical implications for public health policy, suggesting the need to enhance health education, promote positive mental health, and ensure effective media communication. These insights can inform targeted interventions to improve resilience in high-risk group during future public health emergencies. This makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in health communication, a vital subfield within the broader discipline of communication studies.





PERANAN PENDEDAHAN MEDIA, TAHAP PENGETAHUAN, SOKONGAN KELUARGA DAN PEMIKIRAN OPTIMISTIK DALAM MENINGKATKAN DAYA TAHAN MENGHADAPI COVID-19

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengukur tahap pengetahuan, sokongan keluarga, pendedahan media, pemikiran optimistik, dan daya tahan dalam kalangan kumpulan berisiko tinggi di Melaka. Selain itu, kajian ini menilai hubungan antara faktor-faktor tersebut serta mengenal pasti peramal daya tahan yang paling signifikan. Reka bentuk penyelidikan kuantitatif telah digunakan dengan melibatkan seramai 400 orang responden yang melengkapkan soal selidik. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis diskriptif, analisis korelasi Pearson and analisis regresi berganda. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa majoriti peserta mempunyai tahap pengetahuan yang tinggi ($M = 4.11$), sokongan keluarga ($M = 4.07$), pemikiran optimistik ($M = 4.10$), dan daya tahan ($M = 4.14$). Tahap pendedahan media juga tinggi ($M = 3.91$), menunjukkan peranannya yang penting dalam membentuk daya tindak individu. Analisis korelasi Pearson mendedahkan hubungan positif yang signifikan antara pengetahuan, pendedahan media, pemikiran optimistik, sokongan keluarga dan daya tahan. Pengetahuan muncul sebagai peramal daya tahan yang paling kuat, diikuti oleh pendedahan media dan pemikiran optimistik, manakala sokongan keluarga tidak didapati sebagai peramal yang signifikan. Secara keseluruhannya, dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pengetahuan memainkan peranan utama dalam memperkukuh daya tahan kumpulan berisiko tinggi semasa krisis kesihatan. Oleh itu, usaha perlu ditumpukan kepada pelaksanaan pendidikan kesihatan yang lebih berkesan, sokongan psikologi positif, dan komunikasi media yang tepat bagi meningkatkan daya tahan dalam kalangan populasi yang terdedah. Kajian ini memberikan sumbangan yang signifikan kepada khazanah ilmu dalam bidang komunikasi kesihatan, iaitu cabang penting dalam disiplin pengajian komunikasi.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



1.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the motivation for this study by specifically emphasizing on the background information about the factors which affect the resilience among the risk group during the pandemic. In addition, the background of the study, the problem statement, the research objectives, the research questions, the research hypothesis, the conceptual framework of this study, the significance of the study, the limitations of this study, the operational definitions of key terms will be also explained in this chapter.

1.2 Background of the study

In the year 2020, the year which COVID-19 began to spread rapidly and attack the whole world and caused a lot of impact to the society, economics, and politics.





According to Chow and Ng (2020), there were multitude of people, especially risk groups, suffering from anxiety, worries, panic and these caused bad impacts affecting the mental health of people. The COVID-19 endemic had caused previously unheard-of difficulties for people everywhere, having a major impact on socioeconomic, psychological, and physical parts of life. Adversity has been more severe for high-risk group, such as the elderly and frontline workers. It is now necessary for high-risk group to have resilience, and have the ability to change and bounce back from stress and disaster. Strategies needed to be implemented to help high-risk groups by knowing of these factors that can enhance resilience.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declares the COVID-19 pandemic as an emergency to internationally concerned public health, and has gained worldwide attention due to its rapid spreading and given rise to various degrees of disease. Facts have proven that the movement control order (MCO), isolated cases and individual quarantine are effective methods to control the outbreak of spreading diseases, and many countries in the world including Malaysia have adopted such measures and strategies. Saladino, Algeri and Auriemma (2020) stated that different from other crises, the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly led to many changes in individuals' lives and ways, as well as uncertainty daily changes, financial stress and social isolation.

Besides from physical health, the COVID-19 endemic has a major effect on mental and overall well-being, especially among high-risk group. These groups are more exposed to worry, stress, and uncertainty due to social isolation and the risk of major illness (Peker & Cengiz, 2021). It is important in this context to study resilience since it is an ability of adapting to and overcome endemic. As a result, the endemic may cause a heavy psychological and emotional burden to many people.





The SARS-CoV-2 virus, the root cause of the COVID-19 pandemic, led to a global health crisis at the end of the year 2019. It resulted in widespread sickness, deaths, and significant impacts on daily life. COVID-19 is particularly harmful to health among high-risk groups, including the elderly and frontliners. During the pandemic, these people had to cope with not only the health risks caused by the virus but also with mental health-related issues (Guvenc et al., 2020).

This pandemic was a very stressful and anxious time for Malaysians. However, people usually have a high level of resilience during a crisis. In addition, when dealing with life-threatening stress-related stressors, people must rely on each other, create relationships, and manage the strategies to reduce the impact of a public health crisis on their mental health. Understanding a person's mental health outcomes and related factors can help in providing more targeted counselling and assistance, especially to the high-risk groups in Malaysia (Guan et al., 2020).



The worldwide spread of the new COVID-19 virus has disrupted the lives of almost everyone, increasing the psychological pressure on every society and every person around the world. According to Forbes and Fikretoglu (2018), low level of resilience will cause victims for not be able to overcome the stress in difficulty or adversity. According to Danhieux, Buffel and Pairon (2020), chronic diseases are considered as harmful health conditions such as high blood pressure, low level of immune system, anxiety, depression, insomnia, and some others diseases. Various studies have demonstrated the key characteristics of high resilience people, that include psychological, physical factors and social, which can lead to the best results to improve for better life, rejoicing emotion and well-being and reducing depression. The risk groups for this study are participants aged sixty years old and the front-liners who are often contacting with infector such as doctors, nurses and police.





Resilience, known as the ability to bounce back and overcome difficulties, is an important idea in this study of how people face the difficulties that the pandemic created (Grajfoner et al., 2022). During this endemic, resilience involves social, emotional and mental components that help to keep or quickly recovering mental health. Many factors have been discovered to be important for helping high-risk groups build resilience during the COVID-19 endemic.

Resilience is commonly defined by selected criteria for determining high- or low-level indices, therefore, one should focus on high resilience and characteristics related to defining high levels of resilience. Andersen et al (2015) said that dealing with stress in an aggressive and positively way is called resilience and it could contribute to health benefits. It is related to long life, reduced incidence of depression and higher life satisfaction. In addition, if this pandemic has no solution, people will also encounter specific impact that may adversely affect their level of mental health and well-being, including feelings of sensitivity to the COVID-19 diseases and response positively to the prevention, recommendations and compliance, for example, social distancing.

According to Macleod, Musich, Hawkins, Alsgaard and Wicker (2016), the normal people with good health is predicted to be more resilience than the people who are old, have chronic diseases and front liners who are exposed to the fatal virus. The second prediction is exploratory, meaning that low level of health can predict resilience, but only in the elderly. This is based on the claim that the health status of the elderly is to some extent expected, and peer groups also support the health of the elderly. The third prediction is also exploratory, referring to high levels of depression and despair that will be associated with high levels of health to predict the lowest level of resilience, but only among young people.





Anand (2021) said that Malaysia government is in transition from COVID-19 pandemic into the endemic phase when Malaysian had achieved at least 80% of vaccinated population. This mean that the community of Malaysian had to practicing to survive with COVID-19 virus. Despite this endemic had changed the lifestyle of people, people are still in low level of resilience. Therefore, it is important to discover which factors that contributing to increase the level of resilience.

According to Lee (2021), most people wanted to know when and how the COVID-19 will end, but there is still no answer. Scientists and experts predict that over time, the COVID-19 will become an endemic from pandemic, but the outbreaks will still occur out of control. An endemic disease does not mean that the disease is out of control. Instead, what needs to be done is to move from seeing COVID-19 as a onetime threat that defines society to seeing it as part of daily life that we must learn to endure.

The transition from pandemic to endemic disease may play different roles in different parts of the world.

Resilience is considered a process that helps people attain positive development. Everyone can be resilient, with their own way of dealing with stress, problems, and challenges. However, the way each person responds to stress depends on various factors. According to Masten (2017), the way people react and adapt is a unique characteristic of each person. The factors that can increase resilience depend on each individual's abilities, like developing a realistic plan and taking steps to implement it, expressing one's needs to others, looking for solutions, and working hard to solve problems. Further, every individual needs to pay attention to his/her own feelings, emotions, thoughts, and actions. Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine the factors affecting the level of resilience among the high-risk groups during the endemic.





1.3 Problem statement

Throughout the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on social institutions, economy, and health systems. High-risk groups in Malaysia, including the elderly, those with long-term medical conditions, those with poor incomes, and those with limited access to healthcare, have been subjected to increased psychological and social stressors that impair their ability to manage and recover (Wong, Alias, & Md Fuzi, 2021). The ability of these high-risk groups to develop and maintain resilience becomes crucial for handling prolonged uncertainty and adjusting effectively to changing threats as the country enters the endemic phase.

Resilience is defined as the psychological capacity to recover from adversity and adapt effectively to life challenges (Luthar et al., 2000; Ungar, 2008). It is influenced by a range of psychosocial factors. Prior research has highlighted the importance of health knowledge, family support, media exposure, and optimistic thinking in fostering resilience (Chow et al., 2021; Habib et al., 2021; Sarwar et al., 2022). These elements shape how individuals perceive threats, evaluate coping mechanisms, and engage in protective behaviours. However, most of the existing studies are centred on urban populations, healthcare professionals, or students, often neglecting community-level experiences in less urbanised areas such as Malacca.

Among the factors influencing resilience, media exposure has emerged as both a potential enabler and a barrier to resilience. While the media can serve as a valuable channel for disseminating health information and triggering protective behaviours, excessive or unreliable media exposure during the COVID-19 “infodemic” has been linked to increased anxiety, misinformation, and diminished psychological well-being (Lee et al., 2022). Constructive media exposure characterised by clarity, trustworthiness, and relevance has been found to enhance health knowledge,





strengthen optimism, and support psychological adaptation (Mo et al., 2021; Chow et al., 2021). However, no non study has explored how different forms and intensities of media consumption affect resilience among high-risk groups in semi-urban or rural Malaysian contexts, where digital reliance is rising but media literacy may be uneven.

Perceptions of perceived severity and susceptibility, which are the elements that influence health-related decision-making in the Health Belief Model (HBM), can be influenced by knowledge (Mo et al., 2021). People may determine the severity of the illness and their risk of contracting it with accurate knowledge, which helps them become more resilient. Maladaptive ways of coping, fear, and uncertainty can all be worsened by ignorance or exposure to false information. This is especially an issue for the high-risk groups in Malacca, where there may be limited access to the internet.

Based on the HBM, family support provides a cue to action that leads people to adopt protective health behaviours and maintain their sense of safety and resilience in the face of risks. However, people do not have equal access to family support. This essential resource may be absent among those who live alone, have tense relationships, or deal with conflicts at home. Encouraging adaptive coping, emotional control, and healthy habits can lead to optimistic thinking, which in turn, can substantially increase resilience (Yildirim & Guler, 2020). According to the HBM, self-efficacy and optimistic thinking are closely related. However, optimism can be difficult to maintain when one is faced with fear, social isolation, and ongoing uncertainty. Long-term exposure to cycles of bad news, deaths of loved ones, or financial difficulties can dim hope, particularly in groups that are already at risk (Dymecka, 2021).

The HBM offers a useful theoretical lens for this inquiry, emphasising how high-risk groups' perceptions of susceptibility, severity, benefits, barriers, cues to action, and self-efficacy influence their health-related behaviours (Champion & Skinner, 2008).





The use of the HBM to study resilience, especially from the perspective of optimism and media exposure, remains scarce, even though it has been widely used for studying preventive behaviours such as vaccinations and hygiene practices. The Health Belief Model (HBM) also can be used to understand the psychological mechanisms that influence resilience, particularly among high-risk group during this COVID-19 endemic (Karl et al., 2022). Although HBM was originally developed to explain preventive health behaviors, its constructs are also highly relevant in predicting how individuals cope with and adapt to this endemic, which is about resilience.

Given this gap, this study aims to investigate how media exposure, alongside health knowledge, family support, and optimistic thinking, influences resilience among high-risk populations in Malacca during the endemic phase of COVID-19. By generating localised and context-sensitive insights, this study seeks to inform the development of tailored communication strategies, public health interventions, and media literacy programmes that enhance resilience among vulnerable Malaysian communities in the post-pandemic era.

1.4 Objectives of the study

RO1: To measure the level of knowledge, family support, media exposure, optimistic thinking, and resilience during Covid 19 preventive among risk group in Malacca.

RO2: To measure the relationship between knowledge, family support, media exposure, optimistic thinking, and resilience of risk group in Malacca.

RO3: To measure the best predictor of risk group resilience.





1.5 Research questions

RQ1: What is the level of knowledge, family support, media exposure, optimistic thinking, and resilience during Covid 19 preventive among risk group in Malacca?

RQ2: What is the relationship between knowledge, family support, media exposure, optimistic thinking, and resilience of risk group in Malacca?

RQ3: What is the best predictor of risk group resilience?

1.6 Research Hypothesis

H1: There is a positive correlation between knowledge and resilience among high-risk groups in Malacca.

H2: There is a positive correlation between family support and resilience among high-risk groups in Malacca.

H3: There is a positive correlation between media exposure and resilience among high-risk groups in Malacca.

H4: There is a positive correlation between optimistic thinking and resilience among high-risk groups in Malacca.

H5: Knowledge significantly predicts resilience among high-risk groups in Malacca.

H6: Family support significantly predicts resilience among high-risk groups in Malacca.



H7: Media exposure significantly predicts resilience among high-risk groups in Malacca.

H8: Optimistic thinking significantly predicts resilience among high-risk groups in Malacca.

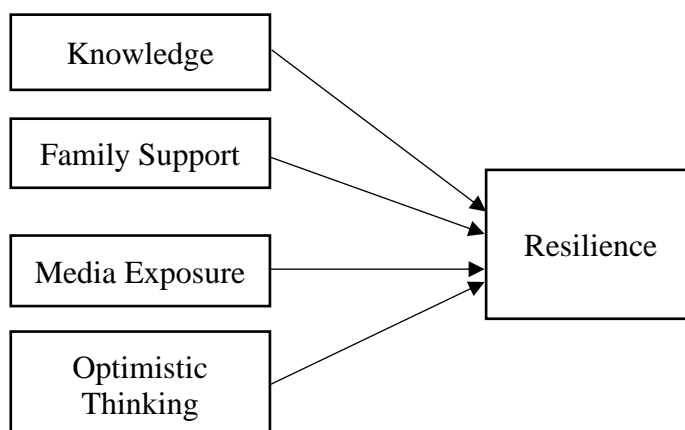
1.7 Conceptual Framework of Research

This research formulated the conceptual framework. The contributing factors that influence the level of resilience among risk group in Malacca are knowledge, family support, media and optimistic thinking.

This conceptual framework provides factors that influence the intention behaviour of risk groups to adopt resilience. If the framework is effective, research's results can be important for academic researchers to implement effective resilience strategies for more people.

Figure 1.1

Conceptual Framework of the Study





1.8 Operational Definition

The operational definitions explain the key concepts based on the context of the study.

The operational definitions of the terms refer to a detailed explanation of the specific terms used in the study.

1.8.1 Resilience

“A dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation with the context of significant adversity” (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2020). Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of distress, adversity, threats or stressful situations. According to Vinkers (2020), resilience is the ability to recover from distress, setbacks and troubles.

Resilience includes “recovery” from these difficult experiences, and it can also lead to deep personal growth. Maintaining resilience does not mean that a person will not encounter difficulties or distress. People who have suffered distress in their lives often suffer from mental pain and stress. In fact, the road to higher resilience can help to overcome emotional distress.

1.8.2 Pandemic

Pandemic is defined as an epidemic of a disease outbreak that spreads to many countries and harmful to many people. According to WHO (2020), when a disease affects the global population, a pandemic is grouped into one category. An epidemic is usually caused by a new infectious agent (bacteria or virus) that spreads rapidly. An epidemic has spread all over the world, affecting many countries and continents. Neither the World Health Organization have stated exactly how many countries are





needed to classify a disease outbreak as an epidemic. But experts seem to agree that in terms of pandemics almost everyone in the global population is at risk of being exposed.

1.8.3 Endemic

According to WHO (2020), Endemic is a meaning it exists naturally or anywhere in a place or group of people. Endemic diseases are most often used to describe diseases that are endemic in a specific place, region or population or limited to a specific place, region or population.

1.8.4 Risk group



According to WHO (2020), risk groups for this study is focusing on people who are older than 60 years or who suffer from chronic diseases such as lung or heart disease, diabetes or conditions that affect their immune system. The front-liner such as doctors, nurses and police, were also risk groups because they often in situation of in contact with COVID-19 patients.

1.8.5 Knowledge

According to Coulombe et al. (2020), knowledge is a person acquire the facts or conditions of familiar things through experience. Knowledge is defined as a person's information or understanding of somethings. Knowledge is the understanding, awareness, or familiarity gained via education, study or experience. It comprises





mental data analysis, which allows people to identify trends, make connections, and form opinions about their surroundings.

1.8.6 Family Support

According to Walsh (2016), Family support refers to the support given by own family member. This includes supporting caregivers in family, assisting families in helping solving problems and giving positive support to families. Family support refers to the support, encouragement, and goods that family members give each other. Family members offer each other physical, financial, and emotional support as they traverse various life events and challenges.



1.8.7 Media exposure

According to Granderath et al. (2020), media exposure can be defined as the degree to which audience members meet in a particular message or in a particular media content. Media exposure also refers to how much a person is exposed to media content, which can include movies, television shows, broadcasts, social media posts, newspapers, magazines, and resources on the internet. It measures how much and how often people are exposed to different media and the messages or information they provide.





1.8.8 Optimistic Thinking

According to Luthar et al. (2014), Optimism is an attitude characterized by hope and confidence in a successful and positive future. Optimists are those who expect good things to happen. Optimistic thinking is a cognitive style characterized by an optimistic outlook and the expectation of positive results. It means keeping a positive outlook, concentrating on workable solutions rather than worrying on issues, and maintaining your confidence to overcome challenges.

1.8.9 Health Belief Model (HBM)

According to Badash et al. (2017), the HBM can be used to understand and anticipate health-related behaviours. It means an individual's understanding of the risk of a health issue, the possible advantages and disadvantages of taking action, and their level of self-efficacy to manage the behaviour all play a role in their decision to take a health-related action.

1.9 Study Limitations

The focus of this study is only in Malacca because according to (Muhammad Shahizam Tazali, 2021), due to Malacca was the highest case among the states in Malaysia. The study is to examine a proportion of risk groups in Melaka who are experiencing the pandemic. The limitation of getting the data might be narrowed to the small sample of the participants in Melaka. Due to MCO and increasing numbers of cases, travelling to other states is impossible to get more data.





Another limitation of the present study is the theory in which the focus is only on the resilience theory that examines limit factors contributing to the resilience level. There might be other potential factors that will increase the level of resilience after the endemic. Though with these limitations, current study provides important knowledge that may help understand the factors that affect the level of resilience after the pandemic. The variables in the study are independent predictors of specific variables that are important to promote resilience after the pandemic.

Another limitation of this study is a factor that affects the efficiency of resilience operations, especially in the long terms. For example, some of the limitations of external and internal factors couldn't be used for study, including the other strategy that might be effective for a short period of time to be increasingly effective.

A challenge faced is half of the participants especially the elderly cannot read and write, most of them use Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia. Therefore, a bilingual questionnaire needs to be formed so more respondents can participate in the survey to understand the items to increase the accuracy of the thesis. The items need to be translated to ensure understanding of the respondents who can't understand the content so that they can answer it.

1.10 Significance of the study

This study will help the risk groups to improve their understandings of which factor will increase the resilience during this endemic. There are several reasons why resilience is important. According to Bartos et al. (2021), it allows risk groups to develop mechanisms to protect people who may be experiencing overwhelming or stress experiences, help us maintain balance in life during difficult or stressful times, and





protect us from certain mental problems during this endemic. Contribution of this research is not limited to risk groups only, but also will enable public health organization & government educate public about important of resilience and to help the public to know the importance of resilience and which factor do contribute to increase the level of resilience and help the public to overcome this crisis in a resilient mode.

According to Andrew, Adam, Brad and Wendy (2017), this resilience research has becoming more important and created a greater sense of urgency for risk groups there are a few reasons for this phenomenon. First of all, the number of risk group people facing distress and the number of people facing distress is getting higher during the endemic. Second, to determine that the risk groups truly understand only the important factors that increase the resilience level. it is hoped that this study helps not only the risk groups but also to develop the resilience theory in local community of Malacca to understand which factors contribute to boost the level of resilience. The findings are meant to provide supports on the importance of resilience.

This research is focusing on exploring how resilience as a component of communication to explain how the people will become resilient when a suitable factor is applied. These processes can be applied to all people because they are experiencing distress during endemic. Andrew et al. (2017), said the best evidence shows recently the resilience process is not only efficient but also applicable. It is hoped that the positive results can help to address the knowledge gap and reflect this process at a high degree of development in many risk groups and are perceived cognitively and physically. The results of indicate that when facing major life events, emotional resilience is an important factor that affects the mental health of adolescents and can increase their coping ability.





Bartos et al. (2021) said that the study also tried to identify the factors that may cause risk groups to regain their positive changes in personal experience that may cause them to create something new the premise for the challenges facing the tragedy during this endemic. It is hoped that in the future, the media exposure further enhances the further theory to help the society to increase the resilience. This study is interesting to discover which factors contribute the highest level of resilience among the risk groups.

This resilience theory has the effects of helping and related to Health Communication Theory. According to Cervera-Torres S et al. (2021), Health Belief Model can help to increase the disease prevention and health promotion of public, especially risk group. During this endemic, they guide public health professionals in the selection, formulation and implementation of the most appropriate interventions. It is important to help the risk group to know the importance of health communication strategies that provide information and influence to promote resilient, and individual and community health.

1.11 Summary

This chapter has discussed how COVID-19 had affected the resilience of people around the world especially risk group people. This chapter also discusses the factors which affect the resilience among risk groups during the COVID-19 endemic. The resilience theory has been explained in which people will bounce back and recover while facing adversity and difficulty. The background of the study, the problem statement, the research objectives, the research questions, the list of the hypothesis, the conceptual framework of the study, the significance of the study, the operational definitions and limitation of the study have been discussed in this chapter. Therefore,





the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between support, media exposure, knowledge and optimistic thinking in high-risk groups during the COVID-19 epidemic. Next chapter would discuss the literature review of the study.

