# COGNITIVE SCIENCES AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

# Negative Life Events and Coping Style among the Young Adults in a Highly Collective Community of Borneo

**Komalavani A/P Subramaniam[1]**
**Mai Sumiyati Ishak[2]\***

[1,2] Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the differences in the interpretation of "negative life events" and the coping style among male and female young adults aged 21-25 in a highly collective community of Borneo. In-depth interviews were deployed, and pattern saturated at 5 males and 5 females. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Finding shows that both gender, males and females, were most affected by self-image and identity crisis, implicating sensitivity for social acceptance/rejection, academic bullying, and friendship, family and and financial issues. Females were significantly affected by friendship problems and tended to deal with it using emotional-focused coping, such as, emotional release, whereas males reported rejection/one-sided love problems and tended to cope using action-focused coping style, such as, confronting, as well as action-focused release, such as, playing games. While the findings support the universal findings in the male-female differences in coping with negative events, this study found a unique difference in the coping style of the males to those of the lesser cohesive community - males in this community were found to be celebrating sharing of problems and emotional discomfort with close friends and family, as much as the females. This study suggests that careful considerations need to be given when generalizing the theory of emotional and social disconnectedness, in males in crisis in the highly cohesive community. Future research using mixed methodology can further explain the nature and generalizability of in-crisis males' emotional and social connectedness in cohesive community, using a larger sample. Findings from this research would be useful to understand how our male and female youngsters in highly collective communities perceive life issues, and the pattern they choose in coping, and further assist in designing effective youth assistance and development programs.

## ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords*: negative life events; coping styles; gender; young adults; collective community

## INTRODUCTION

Negative events are defined as any known major change in a person's environment or circumstances creating an unpleasant feel-

ing like sadness or stress (Synder & Ford, 2013). A large number of recent studies have found that negative life events left out-of-control are associated with the onset of psychiatric disorders, such as, suicide (Wasserman, 2015) and schizophrenia (Cullen, Fisher, Roberts, Pariante, Laurens, 2014), and depression (Korn, Sharot, Walter, Heekeren & Dolan, 2014). The theoretical assumption behind these studies is that negative life events create a temporary state of disequilibrium, which must be readjusted to establish new balance. The expenditure of effort during the adjustment process is believed to drain peoples' emotional, cognitive and even behavioral resources, and thereby, contribute to the deterioration of their physical and psychological health (Verner-Filion, Vallerand, Donahue, Moreau, Martin, Mageau, & Martin, 2014; Rabkin & Struening, 1976).

The development of healthy and productive coping skills are therefore very pertinent, since it is a powerful process that could change what is perceived to be 'negative' and 'traumatic' to one that is 'constructive' and 'developmental', therefore, turns problems into opportunities for development of new skills and life repertoire. Coping responses are defined as the cognitions and behaviors that a person uses to assess and reduce stress and to moderate the inner tension that accompany it (Petty, Ostrom & Brock, 2014; Folkman, 1984). They fulfill two functions: (a) a problem-focused function of channeling resources to solve the stress creating problem; (b) an emotion-focused function of easing the inner tension by intra psychic activity, such as, denial of the stress or changing one's attitude towards it (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Mitchell, Cronkite and Moos (1983) suggested that even if emotion-focused coping aids in maintaining emotional balance, the non-use of problem-solving strategies has negative implications for mental health. Problem-focused coping was related to fewer physical and depressive symptoms (Billings & Moos, 1981; Billings, Cronkite & Moos, 1983).

Young adulthood is a period of lifespan development characterized by dramatic physical, physiological, and social changes. While these transitions provide opportunities for growth, exposure to negative life experiences in a variety of domains (e.g., family, university, friends/social activities) can place a young adult at a risk in coping wisely. Apart from individual factors (life perspectives, cognitive and emotional abilities, personality), social structure and culture does influence coping pattern (Gelhaar, Seiffge-Krenke, Borge, Cicognani, Cunha, Loncaric, Steinhausen & Metzke, 2007).

While an established pattern of coping style was found by many studies in the lesser cohesive communities in Europe and the U.S.A, the extent to which such pattern is generalizable in the highly cohesive communities in the eastern part of the globe, is inconclusive (Sveinbjornsdottir & Thorsteinsson, 2008).

Similarly in Malaysia, while Borneo Malaysia is distinctively more cohesive and less aggressive in the way people approach life compared to counterparts in the more developed West Malaysia, how the community perceives adversities in life, and their preference in coping is not much explored. This study explored the differences in men and women young adults' interpretation of "negative life events" and in the coping style they chose in a highly cohesive community of Borneo Malaysia.

**Men, Women, and Negative Life Events**

Studies in psychology have found "profound differences" in how males and females shape the patterns of life events they face (Steffensmeier & Allen, 1998; Matud, 2004). Females express more negative emotions than men (e.g., Burke & Weir, 1976; Levenson, 1994) and choose to entertain their emotions more than men. Control-related beliefs and post-trauma

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of negative life events were found to be stronger for girls than boys, due to gender differences in cognitive styles, such as, increased use of rumination (rewinding-thinking) in girls (Levenson, 1994). In Malaysia, Essau and Trommsdorff (1996) found that in the cohort of 400 Malaysia tertiary students, recruited from 40 colleges and universities located in East and West Malaysia, the prevalence of negative life events, cognitive distortion and their associated factors were significantly lower among males than females.

**Negative Life Events and Coping Style: A Two-Way Street**

The impact of negative life events might be either buffered or exacerbated by one's habitual coping strategies (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Therefore there is a two-way interaction between negative life events. Negative life events can affect coping style, and similarly the type of coping style dominant in a person's life can either invite or prevent negative life events.

*Influence of Coping Style on Negative Life Event*s: Deploying effective repertoire of coping responses would help one to endure severe and tragic negative events with minimal consequences for his or her mental health, whereas individuals who rely on inadequate coping strategies would develop psychological symptoms in consequence of even normal negative events like not getting good grade in exam. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), when people face less tragic life events, individuals are prone to eliminate the cause of the stress. As the negativity of a certain event become intense and poses a greater threat to emotional balance, individuals use more primitive and inadequate coping processes which are maladaptive and at the same time detrimental to mental health. As a result, it is significant to identify different types of coping style that are adaptive enough when young adults are confronted with negative life events.

Adolescents' ability to use behavioral and cognitive methods to cope with stressful situations has been studied extensively (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001), and it is clear that coping has the potential either to reduce or augment the effects of a negative life event. Murberg and Bru (2005) found that aggressive coping was related to depressive symptomatology and that anger coping sustained depression, perceived stress, and use of illicit substances. "Acting out" or anger coping has been implicated in many studies as a risk factor for depressive symptomatology (Galaif et al., 2003 ), as has coping through rumination (Skitch & Abela, 2008). Based on a longitudinal study, Seiffge-Krenke and Klessinger (2000) reported that avoidant coping was consistently associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms while approach oriented coping was not. Optimistic explanatory coping (e.g., external attribution style when explaining a negative life event) has been shown to reduce the effects of negative life events on suicide ideation (Hirsch et al., 2009). These combined findings indicate that maladaptive coping, such as, acting out and rumination may adversely influence adolescents' depressive symptomatology, while adaptive and approach coping, such as, the use of optimism, seems to have the opposite effect. Maladaptive coping could come in the form of conversion mechanism where one tend to direct their emotion towards something else. However, if it is a bad habit like substance use (drugs, smoking, drinking) and more could only result in harming one's own body. For example, smoking, as a way of coping augments the effects of negative life event on distress (Quebello & Abella, 2011).

The examination of the effects of different ways of coping among adolescents has been extensive but has mainly been focused on 'western' countries. This does not provide data from adolescents in non-western cultures. In non-Western

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countries, different negative life events are encountered, where, for instance, adolescents face increased rates of poverty and HIV (Goodman, 1999), as well as barriers to receiving high quality education (Tella & Akande, 2007). Cultural context must be considered (Gelhaar et al., 2007). Findings and theoretical frameworks from the West need to be tested and examined in non-western cultures. Western research consistently shows that how adolescents cope with life events has an impact on their psychological well being (Carleton, Esparza, Thaxter & Grant, 2008). However, few if any studies have been conducted to examine the effects of different coping strategies on the relationship between the impact of negative life events and psychological distress in adolescents outside western countries. Furthermore, there is a lack of quality cross-culturally valid measures for adolescent coping strategies (Sveinbjornsdottir & Thorsteinsson, 2008).

In light of the current lack of knowledge about negative life events commonly experienced by adolescents in non-western countries, coping mechanisms used to deal with negative life events and their outcomes in non-western countries, and whether measures designed for western cultures are suited for use in non-western cultures, there is a need for research that examines these factors. A result might be the development of high quality interventions to assist adolescents in managing negative life events.

Influence of *Negative Life Events on Coping Style*. Negative life events experienced by adolescents may increase their vulnerability towards failure in adapting and coping the situation well, plus worsening psychological health leading to critical depression, social anxiety and even stress (Christianson, 2014). Cognitive vulnerability theories confirmed that emotional negative life events have a huge impact on the development of negative emotions that could lead to serious mental illness like depression. The presence of negative life

events has been found to be a reliable risk factor for the development of emotional symptoms in both females and males. Females are known to be more vulnerable to emotional symptoms compared to male because they tend to be more sensitive to negative life events (particularly in interpersonal domains), and easily get anxious even by very small issues or minor negative life events, such as, misunderstandings with their best friends (Hankin & Abramson, 1999).

Learned helplessness theory (Beck, 1987) proposed that those who experienced negative life events that was beyond their self-control and eventually failed to move on with ease, would definitely leave a scar that could not be erased from their mind easily. As a result, whenever they face similar situation in the future, they would think and set on their mind that they could never go through the events just like the last time (Beck, 1987).

Similarly, the hopelessness theory (Benner, Tenner & Chesla, 1996) postulates that emotional symptoms and negative feelings are caused by internal and external factors due to negative life events as in this case. Beck's cognitive theory on the other hand, explains that individuals living by having negative schema on themselves, thinking all the bad traits about them that is not even true at times could easily be fragile, and hard to accept negative life events occurred in their life, and hardly cope well (Broderick, 1998).

## Coping Styles: Cognitive, Emotional, Behavioral Coping

Of all coping style frameworks, most psychologists have duly endorsed the cognitive-emotional-behavioral framework.

*Cognitive Coping*. Marsella and Gratch's (2002) described that cognitive coping occurs when people undergo a thinking process - comprised of avoidance, denial, positive thinking or rational

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thinking. Avoidance is a way of keeping distance both mentally and physically between oneself and the stressor to prevent any trouble or problems (Mikulincer, 2013). Denial on the other hand, is an attempt of completely blocks oneself from anger, sad, frustration, or any other kind of negative feelings and to not admit on the particular statement to make oneself feel less anxious for that time being (Costa & McCrae, 1994). Positive thinking basically is an optimistic approach of being psychologically intelligent by endeavoring strength to actually transform a negative emotion into a more tolerable or positive ones (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Rational thinking is a way of not channeling one's emotion towards a negative event or dilemma directly through his or her acts and behavior (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989). Basically, one just think sanely about the situation that one is facing.

*Emotional Coping* focuses on a person who faces his or her problem with strong emotions, such as, seeking emotional support and emotional venting. Emotional support is an effort of seeking social support to improve one's emotional or mental state (Stanton, Kirk, Cameron, & Danoff-Burg, 2000). Shortly, here individual tend to get help from people he or she trust the most. For an instance, sometimes when one is feeling very tensed and hopeless without knowing what to do, one might find a counselor to talk with, in order to reduce one's stress level and even to come up with a better solution to the problem one is facing. Emotional venting is an approach of expressing one's emotion towards something else. For example, some people tend to eat a lot of food containing high amount of glucose, like chocolates, ice creams and sweets when they are deeply depressed.

*Behavioral Coping* is defined as a form of coping at where the individual is willing to take potential actions or strategies to overcome the stressor (Ben-Porath et al., 1991). Behavioral coping comprises

of the following elements: (a) Instrumental support, which is an approach of utilizing or listening to family and friends past experiences towards the similar problem or situation in order to cope with one's own problem (Stanton, Kirk, Cameron, & Danoff-Burg, 2000); (b) active coping means the direct dealing with the sources of stress with high and focused objective (Endler & Parker, 1990); (c) avoidance is abstaining from the problem and indulges in instant gratification to avoid the pain of facing the problem.

**Men, Women, and Coping Style**

Gender difference in coping, however, has been inconsistent. While some traditional theories suggest some differences in the common coping preferred by males and females, such as, female preference to entertain emotional release first before tending to problem solving (e.g., Burke & Weir, 1976; Levenson, 1994), and males' tendency to use action coping and suppress emotions, gender was not found to moderate the association between control-related beliefs and coping styles in many studies (Essau & Trommsdorff, 1996). Probably boys and girls may have a similar response to feelings that they have little control over desired outcomes. In other words, low-perceived control over one's environment and negative evaluations of one's abilities, capacities, and worth (i.e., control beliefs) may have similar relations to adolescent psychopathology for both boys and girls (Han,Weisz & Weiss, 2001).

**METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative research was done using in-depth interviews on informants aged 21-25 years old. Informants were selected using snowballing technique (to make sure those enlisted are those who had gone through major crisis in life) among the youngsters studying in a public university in Kota Samarahan. Informants

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**Komala's Model of Negative Life Events and Coping Style among Gender by Young Adults**
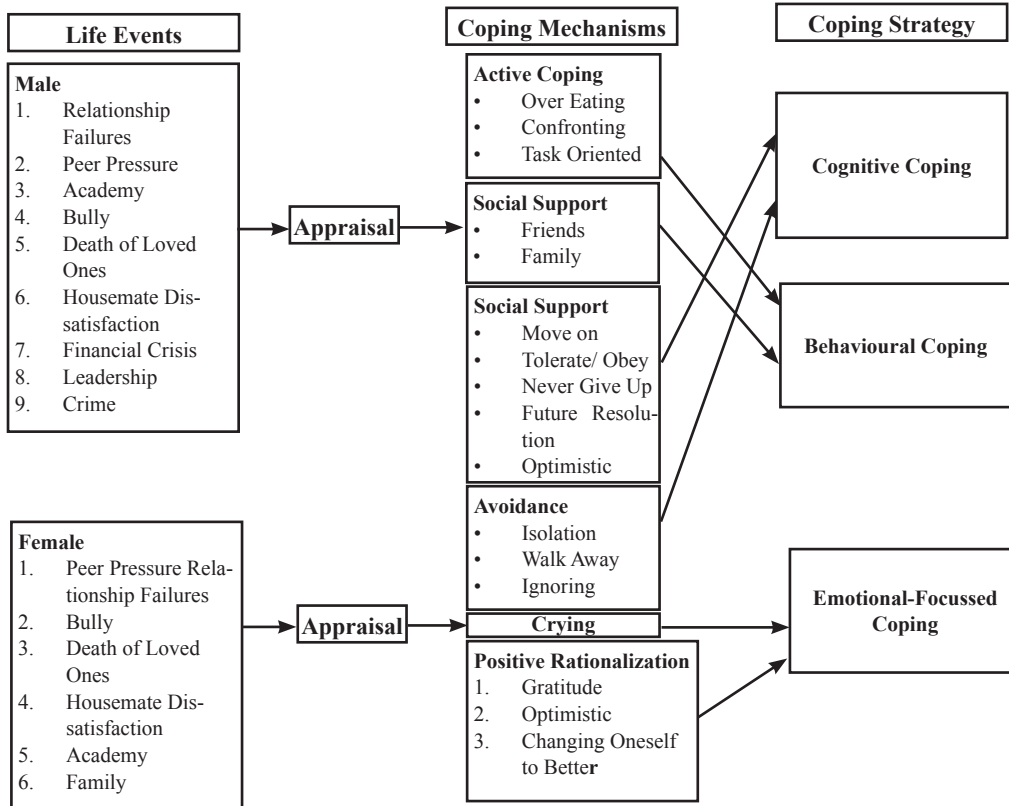


**Figure 1: Komala's model of negative life events and coping style among youth**

possess different academic backgrounds (science, arts and technology). Interview questions were formulated based on the research questions, and validated by 2 experts in psychology. Informants were asked to describe, explore, and explain negative life events most tragic in their lives. Interviews were tape-recorded with informed consent by the informants. At the time the data was saturated and similar patterns were identified, 10 informants were reached. They were 5 males and 5 females, aged 21-25. Data from the recording was then transcribed, onto transcription sheets and analyzed using thematic analysis technique. The full process of analysis was split into three main categories, which is the reduction of the text, the exploration of the text; and lastly the integration of the exploration.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study confirmed that the type of events perceived to be significant differs across age and gender difference in the matter of what is described as negative life events, and in the matter of coping. Komala's model of negative life events and coping style among youth in Figure 1 above describes the findings.

**Men, Women and Negative Life Events**

Since informants are at young adulthood stage (21-25), negative life events were reported to be identity crisis, relationship failures and rejection, friendship problems, academic teamwork issues, family problems, death of parents/loved ones, and financial crises. Both males and females described these events as ''uneasy'' but the

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| Informant 1 | [243-244] I loved that girl very much, argghh…she was very nice; [248-250] She said she cant accept me because, Im fat" |
| Informant 3 | 100-104] Had a crush with that particular girl, a lot…I am a kind person who puts lots and lots of efforts if I really like that |
| Informant 4 | 104-108] About my relationship, okok, so once I had a relationship with this girl, form 6 I think, you know very committed, I text her, first time we met, I fall in love, its was more to first sight love she had an affair<br><br>[122-124] One of my friend told me that she already have another guy. |
| Informant 5 | "[253-260] Because when it comes to relationship, I can forget everything else, I give a lot lar, like unconditionally, but at one point I didn't know that sometimes its hard, took me while to understand that I cant expect back the same thing<br><br>[261-262] I didn't get back what I deserve". |

**Figure 2: Male's interpretation of negative life events**

| Informant 1<br><br>Self image crisis<br><br><br><br><br><br>Social acceptance | Concerned on his obesity, that he was bullied at school because of obesity, and how he went on a crash diet just to get rid of his obesity.<br><br>"[205-206] Physically obese back then I was a bit Chubby<br><br>We have this perception that fat people are ugly".<br><br>"[212] Get bullied like being punched. Even the girl I had crush on, rejected me due to my physical appearance".<br><br>In order to get friends there was a trap for him unlike all the rest normal people, he got to express and show others that he can be just like the others in a particular group.<br><br>"[21-26] Really say, social influence, when you meet up with people, you try to do bad things, its not showing your bad, its just like, you are trying to achieve with certain kind of freedom", |
| Informant 5<br><br><br>Social acceptance | "[25-32] In university level, the most challenging thing for me is the leadership position. As a leader you would be trying to get things done. But the challenging part is that taking care of people's heart while getting things done. Because everybody is different.<br><br>[114-115] People are judging me, talking behind my back. |

**Figure 3: Self-image crisis and social acceptance issues among the males**

significance of each differs by gender.

There are significant differences in what young males and females consider significant negative life events. This difference confirms that the "profound differences" between the lives of women and men based on how they shape the patterns of life events they face (Steffensmeier & Allen, 1998).

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| Informant 2 | "[190-197] after I entered uni, here the some of the seniors I felt superb duper annoying especially those people. There is this scenario at where every time you you see that particular people, this is the conversation, they will be like, who are you and so on". |
|---|---|
| Bullying | "[218-223] A group of girls from Cempaka, all girls asked me to meet them near by the laundry. So, they asked us to come there and stand in the middle, just around you and asked me to do like do whatever they asked for |
| Informant 2 & 4 | 30-32] I had this gang like all Y people and I am the only one different from the rest" |
|  | "[48-49] Suddenly they asked me to compile everything before. He, however obeyed everything and was fine to be compiler" |
| Team-work issues | "[53-55] They didn't respond but after that they send there parts lar but all of their parts were wrong". |
|  | "[63-67] So on the submission day, before I submit my assignment, they went and submitted their own assignment to the lecturer" |
| Informant 3 | " [25-34] It would be during my father's funeral" |
|  | "[39-42] When we tried to find help from our relatives, they said some things that should not be spoken during the funeral time." |
| Family issues - Death of loved ones & financial crisis | "[49-51] They were very reluctant to offer hand at the time we need it the most" |
| Informant 5 | "[194-197] Sometimes, I don't have money you know, like I even have to change the coins that I collected to change into money. |
| Financial crisis | [198-200] But people can still demand me for money that time…like nobody there to even ask me. |
|  | [218-224] When I am very desperate I would ask money from my mother and she would be complaining like why are you spending so much money, you know how much I gave you or not". |

**Figure 4: Extrovert issues among the males**

**His Issues: One-sided love, relationships, self-image and identity, bullying, and financial crisis**

Male informants tend to describe the most negative life events in the form of relationship failures like rejection and one-side love compared to female. This is probably due to their extreme commitment towards love life, at this phase of life, the need to protect the ''weaker'' species, as compared to female students. 4 out of 5 male informants expressed fresh wounds over unrequited love in Figure 2

As a result of one-sided love and rejection, the problem of self-image and identity crises and consequently physical inferiority complex among male infor-

mants are also obvious (Figure 3).

Male informants also portrayed very varied types of negative life events, which are more extroverts, including crime, leadership and financial problems, which the females did not find it significant. Many male informants most probably already engage themselves in the social and economic margins struggle to survive outside the campus life, which brings them into contact with the experiences like crime (Figure 4).

**Her Issues: Friendship first, bullying, conflicts with family.**

Figures 5 shows that female informants put more emphasize on friendship

| | |
|---|---|
| Informant 6 <br><br> Friendship | "[366-368] We were talking about, how they want to include other course mates for our class trip <br><br> [375-378] I was there, and I was quite vocal lar about how I don't want other students to join [385] they gossip. <br><br> But these incidents made the class members hate her and they eventually started to talk bad and gossip about her. They start to spread rumors about how they hate her, even though; all she did was only trying to give a stand and never had any other revenge, grudge or purposive reason behind it. <br><br> "[37-38] Last semester I just moved in to this new apartment. <br><br> "[55-56] There are lots of misunderstandings". |
| Informant 8 <br><br> Friendship | "[21-24] When my friend tried to pull me down. It's like they were talking bad about me and spread rumors <br><br> [25-31] Started when I started to work at a bar, this bar provide charity and work there to be a part of fund raising for Orang Utan wildlife care. So, you know, it's a club, so people's perception. So, that's when they judge me." |
| Informant 9 <br><br> Friendship | Also faced some friendship problem earlier in her school time, when this girl that she really trusted and like to be around suddenly changed. Respondent's friend like to hang out with boys while respondent is a very shy person and she do not like it, so incompatibility occurred that caused misunderstandings. Things went worse went respondent's friend purposely hit her on her head using a water bottle due to extreme anger. Respondent felt so ashamed and embarrassed to have such a friend. |

**Figure 5: Friendship first, for the ladies**

issues over all the others. Female informants tend to show higher significance to 'best friends' and 'companionships' to always be together, and after fought with friends they mostly cope it emotionally and this could be one of the reason why misunderstandings happen faster compared to male students whom take things lighter. Romantic relationship issues strangely, sat at the back seat, only 1 informant out of 5 expressed their misery over relationships.

Bullying does emerge as one influential issue in the life of the female informants (Figure 6).

Family problems in the form of death of breadwinners and the issue of over-protective parents did linger in 3 out of 5 female informants (Figure 7).

**Men, Women Young Adults and How They Cope**

This study confirms the ways male and female young adults differ in the way they cope with negative life events. The whole discussion below uses the essence of Figure 1 (Komala's Model).

**Her Way**

The findings support previous findings that suggest sex differences in coping with stressful and negative life events (Matud, 2004), where women's written and verbal behavior shows that women express more negative emotions than men do (e.g., Burke & Weir, 1976; Levenson, 1994).

Figure 1 shows the female informants tendency to use more emotion-fo-

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| Informant 7 | " [138-143] I have been bullied because of my look. At school, they gave me this nick name, of "ugly beast" and some more they called it out in public". |
|---|---|
| Bullying | [190-194] Wanted to quit from working at the office I mentioned earlier, because the manager just changed me to another place that is very far from my manager. |
| Informant 8 | "**[138-139]** This girl claimed herself as the sister of boss |
| Bullying | [140-141] She will ask me to do everything and I just do". |

**Figure 6: Bullying among female informants**

| Informant 7 | "[18-20] When my father passed away. Because, it happens so suddenly…" |
|---|---|
| Death of father | |
| Informant 10 | "[23-27] I would say it would be when my father passed away. Because after my father passed away, I faced a lot of problem and get to know what the real world is about". |
| Death of father | |
| Informant 9 | "[384-390] So he came by watching me and then he asked, you are doing all this, kawat and all this kind of crap all, I don't know what you going to do with your future, because this year you got PMR". |
| Over-protective family | |

**Figure 7: Family issues among female informants**

cused coping, such as, crying compared to the males when facing negative events.

Passive release of feelings was found to be a major choice of coping amongst young females in this study. Crying alone and never tend to display it in front of others except the closed ones was a popular choice among the female informants. Females were also found to repress or suppress their feelings and thoughts (ignoring talking about the event, opting to focus for lighter and less burdening issues). Figures 5 and 6 also show that females were found to delay problem solving and let their problems linger longer (avoidance). This confirms previous findings that woman are usually more concerned about how problems are solved than merely solving the problem itself (Conner, 2000). For women, solving a problem can profoundly impact whether they feel closer and less alone or whether they feel distant and less connected. The process of solving a problem can strengthen or weaken a relationship. Most men are less concerned and do not feel the same as women when solving a problem. This is because women tend to be intuitive global thinkers. They consider multiple sources of information within a process that can be described as simultaneous, global in perspective and will view elements in the task in terms of their interconnectedness. They take a broad or "collective" perspective, and they view elements in a task as interconnected and interdependent. Women are prone to become overwhelmed with complexities that "exist", or may exist, and may have difficulty separating their personal experience from problems.

**His Way**

The findings supports previous studies in

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that male tend to establish more action-based behaviors in facing negative life events. As could be seen from Figure 2, all the four male informants chosed action-focused coping. For most men, solving a problem presents an opportunity to demonstrate their competence, their strength of resolve, and their commitment to a relationship. How the problem is solved is not nearly as important as solving it effectively. Men have a tendency to dominate and to assume authority in a problem solving process. They set aside their feelings provided the dominance hierarchy was agreed upon in advance and respected. They are often distracted and do not attend well to the quality of the relationship while solving problems. Most of them use the method of confronting straight to the issue probably to get a clearer picture and solve it immediately without keeping it for too long.

The findings however contradicts previous findings that men sought lesser support from friends and families when facing negative events. This study found that the males gathered the support from friends and family, as actively as the females. Families and friends were the place for them to release their negative emotions. This could be also seen from Figure 2 and Figure 4, where four out of five informants exclaimed they sought social support to overcome a negative event they face in their life. This pattern could be due to the nature of the highly cohesive community like in Borneo, where regardless of gender, people enjoy and thrive on the close-knit relationships and sharing and get more involved in each other's life more than those in the lesser cohesive communities.

Males were found to be coping by diverting to issues totally unrelated to the unpleasant negative events they were facing, but again, using active activities (such as playing games or listening to music). They were found to tend to problems one by one, rather than in a bulk. Men come to understand and consider problems one

piece at a time. They take a linear or sequential perspective, and view elements in a task as less interconnected and more independent. Men are prone to minimize and fail to appreciate subtleties that can be crucial to successful solutions. A male may work through a problem repeatedly, talking about the same thing over and over, rather than trying to address the problem all at once.

## CONCLUSION

The findings support the universal theory that the different way males and females youths are wired in thinking and feeling as well as problem solving, has led to differences in the type of life events they perceived more catastrophic, and in the way they cope with each. Male young adults in this study tend to be more sensitive to rejection and failure in romantic relationships, and as such, experienced more significant self-image and identity crisis. Females in this study tend to be more sensitive to friendship problems, and therefore, experienced more impact of social acceptance. Male youths in this study coped by using more behavioral or action coping, meanwhile female mostly coped emotionally and let problems linger longer before tending to solve the problem itself. This study however found a unique difference in the coping style of the males to those of the lesser cohesive community. Contrary to their counter-parts in the lesser cohesive community, males in this community were found to be celebrating sharing of problems and emotional discomfort with close friends and family, as much as the females. This research suggests that precaution needs to be exercised when generalizing the theory of emotional and social disconnectedness of males in crisis, to the highly cohesive community. Future research using mixed method can further explain the nature and generalizability of in-crisis males' emotional and social connectedness in cohesive community, in a

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larger sample. Findings from this research would be useful to understand how male and female youngsters in highly cohesive communities perceive life issues, and the pattern they choose in coping, and further assist in ensuring effective counseling process, and increase relevancy of youth assistance and development programmed. The best coping style addresses all the three elements – cognitive, emotional and action coping because in vulnerable situations, all the three elements of the body are affected. Youth development programs, such as, soft-skills, as well as graduate employability programs may want to give emphasize on specific repertoire on promoting integrated coping that address cognitive, emotional and action coping in helping the youths handle the five events that have a profound effect on the youths – self-image crisis, facing and handling rejection, relationships issues and conflict resolution and maintaining friendships.

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