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Child resilience strategies in transnational children's literature: a comparative study of Tere Liye's *Amelia* and Kuroyanagi's *Totto-Chan*

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Abstract: *Processes of transformation and globalization have contributed to the development of transnational children's literature, revealing similarities and differences in representations of children's psychological experiences. This study aims to describe the resilience strategies portrayed by child characters in Tere Liye's Amelia and Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window and to identify the factors that shape these strategies within their social and cultural contexts. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method and a comparative literary approach. The data consist of narratives, dialogue, and characters' actions that represent resilience strategies and the factors influencing them. Data were collected through close reading and note-taking, supported by semiotic reading. Comparative analysis was conducted using Edith Grotberg's resilience framework of I Have, I Am, and I Can. The findings indicate that both novels represent child resilience as a dynamic process constructed through the interaction of personal capacities and environmental support. Amelia develops resilience through perseverance, problem-solving, optimism, and social concern, reinforced by family support and collectivist values in rural Indonesian society. Totto-chan, by contrast, develops resilience through self-acceptance, curiosity, a willingness to explore, and emotional regulation within a school environment that values individuality, creativity, and supportive teacher–student relationships. These differences suggest that resilience strategies are shaped by educational systems, parenting practices, social relationships, and the cultural values surrounding children's lives.*

Keywords: *children's literature, comparative literature, resilience, transnational literature, literary psychology*

INTRODUCTION

Literature is fundamentally an expression of human feelings conveyed in writing through expressive and aesthetic language. Similarly, children's literature expresses children's feelings, or adopts a child's perspective, in writing intended for children. Adults may therefore write children's literature by drawing on an understanding of children's worlds to engage young readers. Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1998) define children's literature as literature intended for children that addresses themes relevant and appealing to their age, encompassing prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction. Norton (1987), in turn, describes children's literature as literature that adopts a child's perspective and places the child at the center of the narrative.

The study of prose and poetry intended for children constitutes a distinct field known as children's literature. Literary discussion cannot, in general, be separated from children's literature as an integral part of the literary world. Literature belongs not only to adolescents and adults; children also need it as a means of expressing their experiences and feelings.

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Sutherland (1985) argues that children's literature can provide a means of interpreting the world across cultures and civilizations. Similarly, Medress (2008) suggests that its educational benefits lie in its capacity to convey values and lessons, both explicitly and implicitly. These include the development of intelligence, particularly emotional and spiritual intelligence, in support of self-control during childhood and later adulthood. This reinforces the importance of children's literature in children's psychological development, character formation, and personal growth (Karagoz, 2018).

Globalization has increasingly expanded readers' engagement with children's literature from different countries. Such literature is no longer confined entirely by geographical or linguistic boundaries, as works circulate through translation, international publishing, reproduction, and various forms of cultural exchange. O'Sullivan (2005) identifies comparative children's literature as a field specifically concerned with the circulation, relationships, and differences of children's literature across languages and cultures. Children's literature can thus be understood not as an isolated cultural product, but as part of processes of reproduction and cultural assimilation through which readers encounter similarities and differences in constructions of childhood.

As Goldmann and Boelhower (1981) argue, a literary work, including a work of children's literature, constitutes a world or structure shaped by society. Its values and worldviews arise through dialectical and relational processes within society, since the author is a member of society whose worldview is influenced by social structures. Accordingly, representations of child characters in literary works may be examined to observe, assess, and interpret children's behavior through psychological knowledge and approaches. Literary characters may exhibit characteristics resembling those of people in everyday life. Literature may also provide stimuli and alternative objects of inquiry for the development of psychological studies.

One issue that lends itself to comparison from a psychological perspective is child resilience. Resilience generally concerns the capacity to respond to adversity, maintain or recover adaptive functioning, and develop under conditions of risk. Resilience research has increasingly shifted from viewing resilience solely as an individual trait of strength toward understanding it as a process formed through relationships between individuals and their environments. Masten (2014), for example, describes resilience as a dynamic process of adaptation to conditions that threaten functioning, survival, or development.

This perspective is particularly relevant to children's literature. Children do not develop in a social vacuum. Their capacity to address problems is shaped through relationships with parents, teachers, siblings, peers, and their surroundings. Ungar (2011) emphasizes that resilience should be understood within a social-ecological framework, since sociocultural contexts determine the resources available to children and how particular behaviors are understood as adaptive. Thus, two children who encounter different forms of adversity or live in different cultural environments may exhibit different forms of resilience.

Two works of children's literature whose representations of resilience invite investigation and comparison are Tere Liye's Amelia and Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window. Amelia, also known by the title Si Anak Kuat, portrays Amelia as the youngest of four siblings in a rural family. The novel follows her

efforts to establish her identity and demonstrate that she is not weak. The image of the strong child conveyed in the title reinforces this representation throughout the narrative. Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window, meanwhile, is an autobiographical work by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, first published in Japan in 1981. It recounts Kuroyanagi's childhood experiences at Tomoe Gakuen, a school with an unconventional educational system. The novel presents the true story of an elementary school in Tokyo and a young girl who attended it. Tomoe Gakuen is central to Totto-chan's experiences because the headmaster and the school environment attend to children's characters, interests, and individuality.

A closer examination reveals several points of convergence between the works. Both center on girls and make children's development an important component of the narrative. The two novels also portray girls differently within a perspective rooted in Eastern cultural traditions that position women as subordinate. Moreover, both demonstrate that children's capacity to address problems derives not only from personal characteristics but also from environmental support. Nevertheless, the social environments shaping the two protagonists differ. Amelia develops within an Indonesian rural family and community characterized by close kinship ties and social responsibility, whereas Totto-chan develops within a school environment that emphasizes acceptance of individuality, freedom, creativity, and dialogic teacher–student relationships.

On this basis, the study aims to identify the resilience strategies portrayed by child characters in Tere Liye's Amelia and Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window and to examine the factors shaping these strategies within their social and cultural contexts.

Previous studies of Amelia have tended to focus on educational, moral, and character values. Recent research has identified patience, steadfastness, honesty, responsibility, care, mutual assistance, and empathy, relating these values to education within the family (Usroh et al., 2022; Santy et al., 2022; Ramdhanti, 2025). Similarly, studies of Totto-Chan have primarily addressed humanistic education, progressivism, freedom, creativity, and character formation. Research by Amaruddin et al. (2024) and Alatas (2024) indicates that Tomoe Gakuen represents progressive and humanistic educational principles, particularly through independent learning, attention to interests and talents, and meaningful learning experiences.

Research on resilience in children's literature has shown that child characters facing adversity can be represented through the relationship between personal agency and intersubjectivity. Hammer (2009), Hong (2024), and Latumeten and Janah (2024) demonstrate that resilience in narratives about marginalized children cannot be separated from social relationships that provide children with agency and opportunities to act. More recent research also suggests that children's literature can introduce strategies for coping with adversity, as narratives offer examples of adaptive behavior while enabling readers to develop empathy for characters (Tovey, 2021; Ramamurthi et al., 2024).

However, the literature search undertaken for this study did not identify research specifically comparing child resilience strategies in Amelia and Totto-Chan using Grotberg's framework while also relating them to Indonesian and Japanese cultural contexts. This is the research gap the study seeks to address. Rather than

stopping at the question of which values appear in the novels, the study examines how resilience is constructed and which factors shape resilience in the child characters.

The study's novelty lies in its integration of three perspectives. First, Grotberg's concept of resilience is used to identify resilience resources through the categories of I Have, I Am, and I Can. Second, a comparative literary approach examines similarities and differences in representations of resilience in two works from different cultural backgrounds. Third, an investigation of social and cultural factors explains why the resilience strategies portrayed in these works differ.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Child Resilience

The concept of resilience was initially used extensively to explain individuals' capacity to survive or develop despite exposure to risk. Subsequent research has shown that resilience should not be understood as a fixed personality trait. It is more appropriately understood as a process of adaptation that enables individuals to maintain relatively positive developmental functioning when faced with adversity and unfavorable conditions.

Masten (2014) refers to resilience as ordinary magic, a capacity that can emerge through ordinary human adaptive systems operating in everyday life. Children therefore do not need exceptional strength to be resilient. Secure relationships, caregiving, learning opportunities, self-regulation, and social support can serve as protective mechanisms that enable children to address the difficulties and challenges they encounter.

Grotberg (1998) offers a more operational model for understanding the sources of child resilience. In A Guide to Promoting Resilience in Children, she groups resilience resources into three main categories: I Have, I Am, and I Can. First, I Have refers to children's external sources of support. These include trusting relationships, family, adults who establish boundaries and rules, safe environments, and behavioral role models. Second, I Am refers to personal strengths and qualities that develop within children, including feeling loved, having a sense of self-worth, being responsible and optimistic, caring for others, and believing in their own abilities. Third, I Can concerns interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Children with I Can resources are able to communicate, seek help, solve problems, manage feelings, and establish social relationships. These three categories are relevant to literary analysis because they can be identified through characters' actions, dialogue, psychological narration, relationships, and experiences.

Resilience from a Social-Ecological Perspective

Grotberg's model (1998, 2001) can be complemented by Ungar's (2011) social-ecological perspective. Whereas Grotberg helps identify resilience resources within a text, Ungar helps explain why these resources assume particular forms in specific social and cultural environments. Ungar views resilience as arising from reciprocal relationships between individuals and their social and physical environments. From this perspective, families, schools, peers, communities, and social resources create opportunities for children to address difficulties and challenges. Ungar therefore argues that context and culture moderate the expression of resilience. In other words, some

aspects of resilience are universal, but its manifestations may vary according to the values, resources, and social relationships available within children's environments.

Comparative Studies of Transnational Children's Literature

From a comparative perspective, literary works can move beyond the boundaries of the contexts in which their authors produced them (Qomariyah, 2022). In children's literature, a comparative approach therefore enables analysis to move beyond a single text and examine how constructions of childhood are negotiated across cultures. O'Sullivan (2005) shows that children's literature crosses linguistic and cultural boundaries through translation and literary exchange. Comparative children's literature consequently examines not only themes but also relationships among texts, cultures, history, translation, and constructions of childhood.

Within this framework, Amelia and Totto-Chan are not compared to determine which is superior. Rather, they are treated as two representations through which the study examines how children's experiences of addressing problems are shaped by their respective cultural environments.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, combining comparative literature and literary psychology approaches. The comparative literary approach identifies similarities and differences in representations of resilience strategies in two works from different cultural contexts. The literary psychology perspective examines the child characters' actions, attitudes, emotional responses, and psychological development in the face of adversity. Tere Liye's Amelia and Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window were selected because both focus narratively on girls' experiences while differing substantially in their social and cultural settings.

The data sources are Tere Liye's Amelia, published by Republika in 2013 and comprising 390 pages, and Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window, translated into Indonesian as Totto-Chan Gadis Cilik di Jendela and published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2008. The data comprise words, phrases, sentences, dialogue, narratives, characters' actions, emotional responses, and narrative events indicating resilience strategies and the factors contributing to resilience in the two novels. The identified data were classified according to Grotberg's three resilience resources: I Have, I Am, and I Can.

Data were collected through close reading and note-taking. The researcher read both novels repeatedly to develop a comprehensive understanding of their plots, characters, relationships, and social contexts. Subsequent reading focused specifically on passages depicting adversity, characters' responses, environmental support, and changes in behavior or attitudes after encountering problems. Relevant data were recorded in a matrix organized by text identification, data type, event context, Grotberg's resilience category, resilience strategy, and contributing factors. Heuristic and hermeneutic semiotic reading was used to interpret actions, dialogue, and situations as signs carrying psychological and social meanings rather than merely as narrative elements.

Data analysis proceeded in stages. First, the data were reduced by selecting passages directly related to child resilience. Second, the selected data were categorized

as I Have, I Am, or I Can. Third, each item was analyzed to identify the strategies used by the characters to address problems. Fourth, the strategies employed by Amelia and Totto-chan were compared to identify similarities and differences. Fifth, the comparative findings were related to the environmental contexts and social relationships surrounding the characters within their different cultural settings.

Data validity was addressed through triangulation, including repeated reading, sufficient reference support, and cross-checking textual interpretations against resilience theory and previous research. Interpretive credibility was strengthened by comparing evidence from narration, dialogue, and characters' actions, ensuring that conclusions did not rely on a single type of data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Child Resilience Strategies in Amelia and Totto-Chan

The findings indicate that child resilience in both Amelia and Totto-Chan is constructed through relationships between personal capacities and environmental support. However, the dominant strategies differ. Amelia primarily exhibits resilience through steadfastness, perseverance, problem-solving, responsibility, and concern for communal life. Totto-chan primarily exhibits resilience through self-acceptance, curiosity, exploration, a willingness to express herself, and the capacity to manage emotional experiences.

Table 1. Mapping the Resilience Strategies of Amelia and Totto-Chan

Resilience resource	Amelia (character: Amelia)	Totto-Chan (character: Totto-chan)	Supporting factors
I Have	Family, parents, siblings, teachers, village community	Parents, headmaster, teachers, friends	Secure and supportive relationships
I Am	Steadfast, responsible, caring, optimistic, persevering	Confident, curious, open, courageous, accepting of her individuality	Acceptance and reinforcement of identity
I Can	Solving problems, helping others, making decisions, enduring difficulties	Communicating, exploring, regulating responses, forming relationships	Opportunities to act and space to try
Dominant strategies	Perseverance and problem-solving	Exploration, self-acceptance, and emotional regulation	Educational practices and social relationships
Social orientation	Collectivity, family, responsibility toward the community	Individuality within supportive social relationships	Cultural values and educational institutions

Table 1 shows that all three resilience categories are present in both works. Resilience can therefore be regarded as a point of convergence across cultures, although its actual forms differ. In Amelia, resilience tends to be constructed through perseverance and steadfastness oriented toward family and community. In Totto-Chan, it tends to be constructed through self-acceptance developing within a supportive educational environment.

This finding is consistent with Grotberg's cross-cultural research, which identifies resilience elements across different contexts while showing that their development and expression remain influenced by cultural conditions.

Amelia's Resilience Strategies: Personal Steadfastness and Collective Orientation

Amelia is portrayed as a child who encounters various problems in family, school, and community life. The adversity she experiences does not always involve major traumatic events. Much of her development instead occurs through everyday challenges: family expectations, sibling relationships, educational issues, community life, and situations requiring her to take a position.

This makes Amelia's resilience particularly significant. Resilience does not always manifest as heroic action; it also involves the capacity to fulfill responsibilities under difficult circumstances. It frequently develops through ordinary adaptive systems operating in everyday life.

Within the I Am category, Amelia demonstrates steadfastness, responsibility, care, and optimism. These qualities make her more than a character who merely endures; she learns how to respond to problems. As the youngest of four siblings, Amel feels that she has no authority over anyone. She feels that her older siblings frequently scold her, give her advice, and sometimes tease her. Her everyday experiences bring out patience, steadfastness, honesty, responsibility, perseverance, empathy, and mutual assistance. These findings support an interpretation of Amelia's character as constructed through a combination of personal strength and social orientation.

> *Akulah* Amelia, anak bungsu keluarga. Aku penunggu rumah. Kampung ini adalah duniaku. Jika ada orang yang bertanya apa cita-citaku, sejak ladang kopi ini mulai ditanami aku sudah memilikinya. Tidak besar, tidak megah, sederhana saja, tapi itu adalah pilihan hidupku. Aku memilihnya sendiri dengan kesadaran terbaik. (Liye, 2013: 388)
>
> [I am Amelia, the youngest child in the family. I am the one who stays at home. This village is my world. If anyone asks what I aspire to be, I have known since we began planting this coffee field. Nothing grand or magnificent, just something simple, but it is my choice in life. I have chosen it myself, with the fullest awareness I can muster]. (Liye, 2013, p. 388)
>
> *"Pokoknya amel benci jadi anak bungsu… Kalau begitu, kau sepertinya mau jadi anak sulung seperti kak Eli , Amel ? Aku menggeleng kencang. Lantas anak nomor berapa?*
> *"Berapapun, asal bukan anak bungsu. Aku menjawab dengan ketus*" (Liye, 2013:19)

[*"Amel just hates being the youngest. …" "Then it sounds as though you want to be the eldest, like Kak Eli, Amel?" I shook my head vigorously. "Then which child do you want to be?"*
"Any of them, as long as I'm not the youngest," I answered curtly]. (Liye, 2013, p. 19)

The I Have dimension is evident primarily in the presence of family and the social environment. In Amelia, the family is more than a narrative setting; it is a support system that shapes how Amelia understands difficulties. Relationships with parents, siblings, and community members establish boundaries while providing values that guide her behavior. As the youngest child, Amel receives abundant affection alongside lessons from her family that she finds unpleasant.

Children's relatively simple interpretations of anger as dislike and prohibition as hatred prevent Amelia from recognizing that her family's actions express affection in different ways. This is illustrated by the following passage, presented as reflecting Amel's mother's thinking.

Aku berkata pelan. Lebih tepatnya, aku bicara sambil memikirkan sesuatu. Tetap tidak ada uang untuk sekolah. Anak-anak kampung terpaksa bekerjadi ladang, mencari rotan, mengambil rebung di hutan, menangkap ikan di sungai. Kampung ini bertahun-tahun hanya akan seperti itu. Anak-anaknya, cucu-cucunya tetap akan menjadi petani miskin. (Liye, 2013:195)

[I spoke softly. More precisely, I spoke while thinking about something. There was still no money for school. The village children had to work in the fields, gather rattan, collect bamboo shoots in the forest, and catch fish in the river. For years to come, the village would remain this way. Its children and grandchildren would continue to be poor farmers]. (Liye, 2013, p. 195)

The following passage also illustrates an episode in which Amel and Kak Eli are assigned to gather firewood in the forest. Amel slips in the rain, and Kak Eli becomes deeply concerned about her. Amelia eventually learns from her mistaken view of her family, as the following dialogue shows:

"kau tahan sebentar rasa sakitnya, Amel. Sebentar lagi kita sampai. Kak Eli tersenyum dengan tulus.
Maafkan Amel kak "?
Maafkan apa amel"?
Maafkan Amel yang selama ini tidak menurut? (Liye, 2013:75)

["Bear the pain for a little while, Amel. We'll be there soon." Kak Eli smiled sincerely.
"Please forgive Amel, Kak."
"Forgive you for what, Amel?"
"For not listening to you all this time."](Liye, 2013, p. 75)

These passages suggest that Amelia's resilience is social-ecological. Her capacities do not exist in isolation, as her family and community provide the social resources through which she develops steadfastness and responsibility. Resilience thus involves individuals' capacity to access and use resources regarded as socially and culturally meaningful.

Meanwhile, I Can is evident in Amelia's ability to solve problems, help others, take action, and adapt to environmental demands. These abilities demonstrate that resilience is not merely a psychological state but also a competence expressed through action.

> *Kecil-kecil begini aku pernah diajak Paman Unus masuk ke hutan yang lebih jauh dari ladang Mang Dullah. Dan meski betisku baret kena duri, badanku digigit nyamuk, tidak sekalipun aku merepotkan paman. Bahkan paman bilang, "kau benar-benar anak yang kuat Amel."(Liye, 2013: 18)*
>
> [Young as I am, Uncle Unus once took me into the forest, farther than Mang Dullah's field. Even though thorns scratched my calves and mosquitoes bit my body, I did not trouble him once. He even said, "You really are a strong child, Amel."] (Liye, 2013, p. 18)
>
> *Dibantu oleh teman seperjuangannya, yaitu Maya, Norris, Tambusai, mereka saling membantu dalam proses penanaman bibit kopi di kampungnya agar kopi yang ada di kampungnya dapat tumbuh dengan bagus dan dapat dijual di pasaran. Setelah dua jam bekerja tanpa henti, seluruh lahan persemaian sudah bersih. Pergelangan tanganku yang memegang cangkul terasa sakit, telapaknya melepuh. Padahal aku bergantian dengan Maya.*
> *"Kau baik-baik saja Amel?" Norris bertanya. (Liye, 2013: 316)*
>
> [With the help of her companions Maya, Norris, and Tambusai, Amelia participates in planting coffee seedlings in the village so that the coffee can grow well and be sold at market. After two hours of uninterrupted work, the entire nursery plot was clear. The wrist with which I held the hoe ached, and my palm was blistered, even though Maya and I took turns.
> "Are you all right, Amel?" Norris asked.] *(Liye, 2013, p. 316)*

Significantly, these strategies are not primarily directed toward individual achievement. Amelia's strength has social consequences: helping her family, caring for others, and considering the village's future. The term "strong child" in the novel therefore refers not only to personal endurance but also to the capacity to fulfill social responsibilities. Amelia's resilience can thus be understood as grounded in steadfastness and social connectedness. She becomes strong by learning to address problems while recognizing her place within a family and community.

Totto-Chan's Resilience Strategies: Self-Acceptance and Freedom to Explore

The construction of Totto-chan's resilience follows a different pattern. Initially, she encounters an educational environment that cannot fully understand her behavior.

Her energy, curiosity, and way of perceiving the world bring her into tension with a more conventional educational system.

In this situation, Totto-chan's resilience strategies do not develop primarily through demands for passive conformity. Instead, the Tomoe Gakuen environment allows her to retain her curiosity, explore, and develop her individuality.

Tomoe Gakuen is particularly important because the school functions as a protective environment. Research on the novel indicates that education at Tomoe Gakuen emphasizes freedom, individuality, creativity, independence, and learning aligned with children's interests.

Within the I Am category, Totto-chan demonstrates curiosity about the world around her. She experiences what she sees, hears, and feels as extraordinary, prompting her to seek further understanding. Despite her young age, she is portrayed as an exploratory child with many questions and a desire to learn. The following passage illustrates her exploratory disposition, courage, and perseverance:

> "*Dia bercerita kepada Kepala Sekolah tentang betapa cepatnya kereta yang mereka tumpangi; tentang bagaimana ia minta diperbolehkan menyimpan satu karcis kereta kepada petugas pengumpul karcis, tapi tidak diizinkan; tentang sarang burung wallet; tentang Rocky, anjingnya yang berbulu coklat dan bisa melakukan berbagai keterampilan; tentang bagaimana dia suka memasukkan gunting ke dalam mulutnya waktu di Taman Kanak Kanan dan gurunya melarangnya karena lidahnya bisa tergunting, tapi dia tetap saja melakukannya; tentang bagaimana dia membersit hidung karena Mama memarahinya kalau hidunya meler; tentang Papa yang sangat pandai berenang dan menyelam."* (Kuroyanagi, 2011)
>
> [She told the headmaster how fast the train they had taken was; how she had asked the ticket collector if she could keep a train ticket but had not been allowed to; about the swallow's nest; about Rocky, her brown dog, who could perform all sorts of tricks; about how she liked putting scissors in her mouth in kindergarten and how her teacher had forbidden it because she might cut her tongue, but she kept doing it anyway; about how she blew her nose because Mama scolded her when it ran; and about Papa, who was very good at swimming and diving.] *(Kuroyanagi, 2011)*

Within the I Have category, Totto-chan's primary resilience resource consists of relationships in which she is accepted. The headmaster's role is particularly important. Kodansha itself highlights the headmaster's attention to Totto-chan's stories as a defining feature of her educational experience. At Tomoe Gakuen, children are free to determine the order in which they study their subjects. This approach gives children a sense of autonomy while strengthening responsibility and independence in learning. The headmaster allows pupils to pursue what they enjoy, as illustrated in the following passages:

Ayo anak-anak, Kalian boleh memulai dari apa saja yang kalian sukai."
Jadi setiap murid boleh memulai dari pelajaran yang disukai-nya. (Totto Chan, 1998: 28)
[*"*Come on, children. You may begin with whatever you like."
Thus, each pupil could begin with the subject they liked.] (Totto Chan, 1998, p. 28)
…
"jadi, kepala sekolah mendengar cerita toto selama empat jam penuh." (Kuroyanagi, 1998: 21)
[*"*So the headmaster listened to Totto's stories for four whole hours."] (Kuroyanagi, 1998, p. 21)

This acceptance has important psychological implications: Totto-chan does not have to suppress her individuality before developing as a person. Instead, her individuality is given room to grow. Within the I Am framework, this relates to self-worth, self-acceptance, courage, and confidence in her abilities.

Previous research on humanistic philosophy in Totto-Chan has likewise found that the novel depicts the strengthening of self-confidence, freedom and responsibility, the development of abilities based on interests, and opportunities for children to develop their own perspectives and forms of expression.

Within the I Can category, Totto-chan's curiosity develops into the ability to explore, communicate, make decisions, and establish relationships with her environment. Freedom in the novel therefore does not mean the absence of rules. Rather, it provides a means for children to develop responsible capacities. The following passage illustrates a pronounced awareness of the challenges faced and of Totto-chan's resilience:

Banyak sekali yang masih bisa kutulis tentang Tomoe. Tapi aku cukup puas jika bisa membuat orang sadar bahwa seorang gadis cilik seperti totto Chan, jika diberi pengaruh yang tepat oleh orang dewasa, akan bisa menjadi pribaddi yang pandai menyesuaikan diri dengan orang lain." (Kuroyanagi, 2011)

[There is so much more I could write about Tomoe. But I will be satisfied if I can make people realize that a little girl like Totto-chan, given the right influence by adults, can become someone who gets along well with others.] (Kuroyanagi, 2011)

This finding is significant because recent research on Totto-Chan also identifies a tension between discipline and freedom. Tomoe Gakuen is represented as an alternative educational space to models that impose strict normalization.

Totto-chan's resilience can therefore be understood as grounded in self-acceptance and support from the educational environment. She becomes strong through an environment that enables her to understand and develop her potential, rather than through pressure to conform to a particular standard.

Factors Shaping the Construction of Resilience from a Comparative Perspective

Comparing the novels reveals a fundamental similarity: child resilience is never entirely individual. Amelia develops steadfastness within a network of family and community relationships. Totto-chan sustains her curiosity and develops courage within a school environment that accepts her. Both novels thus challenge an understanding of resilience as an individual capacity that develops without environmental support.

This finding accords with Ungar's (2013) social-ecological perspective, which holds that resilience develops through relationships between individuals and their environments. The environment provides resources that enable children to adapt, while children develop the capacity to access and use those resources. Differences nevertheless emerge in the resources most prominently represented. In Amelia, family and community form the main foundation. Values such as responsibility, care, helping others, and steadfastness derive legitimacy from close social relationships. Amelia's resilience consequently tends to be relational and communal. In Totto-Chan, the school is the primary site of resilience development. The headmaster's support and an educational system that values individuality enable Totto-chan to develop self-confidence, creativity, and a willingness to explore. Her resilience therefore tends to be exploratory and grounded in self-acceptance. These differences can be summarized as follows.

These differences do not imply that Indonesian society is wholly collectivist or that Japanese society is wholly individualist. Such conclusions would oversimplify culture. Rather, the novels select and emphasize different configurations of social values in shaping their child protagonists' experiences.

Culture is therefore better understood as a context influencing the likelihood of particular strategies emerging, rather than as the sole determinant of characters' behavior. This view is consistent with Ungar's research, which identifies both common elements of resilience and variations closely dependent on context and culture.

Education, Family, and Social Relationships as an Infrastructure for Resilience

An important finding is that families and schools function as an infrastructure for resilience. This term emphasizes that social support is more than background context; it is a condition enabling children's personal strategies to develop.

In Amelia, the family provides a structure of values. Advice, care, the allocation of responsibilities, and family relationships establish a framework for Amelia's decisions. When encountering problems, she asks not only "What do I feel?" but also "What should I do?" as a member of her family and community. In Totto-Chan, the school serves a somewhat different function by providing space for exploration. Teachers and the headmaster enable children to learn from experience, mistakes, interaction, and curiosity. Research on Tomoe Gakuen indicates that the educational model represented in the novel positions interests, talents, independence, and social relationships as important components of education.

This difference suggests that supportive environments need not take identical forms. Support may involve structure and social connectedness, as in Amelia, or acceptance and opportunities for exploration, as in Totto-Chan. This also reinforces Grotberg's concept of I Have. Children need others as sources of security and support

before developing I Am and I Can. Grotberg explicitly identifies trusting relationships and adult support as important resources for resilience development.

The two novels therefore present a sequence that can be expressed simply as follows:



However, this process is not entirely linear. Children's experiences can also reinforce their social relationships. A child who solves problems may gain greater trust from others, and that trust can subsequently strengthen resilience.

Resilience as a Universal yet Contextual Motif

The comparison reveals a productive paradox. Resilience can be described as a universal motif because both texts portray children who encounter problems and develop adaptive capacities. However, the forms of resilience are not universal.

In Amelia, being "strong" is primarily associated with steadfastness, responsibility, the capacity to address problems, and concern for others. In Totto-Chan, strength is more apparent in the capacity to sustain curiosity, accept oneself, try new things, and develop through experience. The study therefore proposes that the universality of resilience lies in its function rather than in the form of its strategies. Its function is to help children address adversity and continue developing. Its forms are shaped by experience, social relationships, educational institutions, families, and cultural values.

This understanding accords with cross-cultural research identifying both common and culturally specific aspects of child resilience. Grotberg finds that cultural differences do not negate the existence of resilience, while Ungar shows that cultural contexts shape its resources and forms of expression.

From the perspective of transnational children's literature, these findings are significant because they suggest that literary exchange across countries need not produce uniform representations of childhood. Instead, encounters between texts allow readers to recognize how the same problem—in this case, coping with difficulty—can receive different responses in different cultures.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Tere Liye's Amelia and Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window both represent child resilience as a dynamic process formed through relationships between personal strengths and environmental support. Within Edith Grotberg's framework, all three resilience resources—I Have, I Am, and I Can—can be identified in both works. However, they are realized through different strategies and social environments.

Amelia is represented as a child who develops resilience through steadfastness, perseverance, problem-solving, responsibility, optimism, and social concern. These strengths grow through close relationships with family and community. In this context, being a strong child means not only addressing personal problems but also contributing to the social environment. Totto-chan, by contrast, develops resilience through self-acceptance, curiosity, a willingness to explore, communication skills, and the management of emotional experiences. Tomoe Gakuen plays an important role by providing space for individuality, creativity, and the development of children's potential. Support from teachers and the headmaster constitutes an external resource that enables Totto-chan to develop confidence in herself.

The comparison demonstrates that resilience is a motif found across cultures, although the ways in which it is formed and expressed are not universal. In Amelia, resilience is portrayed more prominently through family connectedness, responsibility, and social orientation. In Totto-Chan, it is developed more extensively through acceptance of individuality, freedom in learning, and a supportive educational environment. These differences highlight the importance of considering social and cultural contexts when interpreting psychological representations of children in literature.

The study's principal contribution lies in bringing comparative children's literature into dialogue with a resilience perspective. This approach enables resilience to be interpreted not merely as an inherent quality of a "strong" character, but as a process formed through interactions between children and their environments.

More broadly, this study suggests that transnational children's literature offers an important space for understanding diverse constructions of childhood. The encounter between Amelia and Totto-Chan indicates that experiencing difficulty can be shared across cultures, while strategies for addressing it remain rooted in particular social conditions, educational environments, families, and cultural values.

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