

Bangkit Semangat—Raise the Spirits: Teachers’ Vulnerability, Resilience, and Voice in Postdisaster Indonesia

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Source: *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (December 2023), pp. 157-182

Published by: Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies

Stable URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2451/69898>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33682/kgxe-8w4w>

REFERENCES:

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Henderson, Christopher. 2023. “*Bangkit Semangat*—Raise the Spirits: Teachers’ Vulnerability, Resilience, and Voice in Postdisaster Indonesia.” *Journal on Education in Emergencies* 9 (1): 157-82. <https://doi.org/10.33682/kgxe-8w4w>.

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BANGKIT SEMANGAT—RAISE THE SPIRITS: TEACHERS' VULNERABILITY, RESILIENCE, AND VOICE IN POSTDISASTER INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The recent discussion paper on teachers presented at the United Nations Transforming Education Summit emphasizes the inclusion of teachers in social dialogue at the global and local levels. However, the requisite structural arrangements are not yet in place for teachers' voices to be heard or their perspectives acted on, especially in humanitarian settings. Only now are humanitarian actors beginning to understand the ways in which teachers respond to and work during complex emergencies. Humanitarian actors are also coming to realize how rarely teachers' perspectives inform the technical guidance documents that determine the conditions in which they work (Adelman 2019; Falk, Shephard, and Mendenhall 2022; Pherali, Abu Moghli, and Chase 2020). Based on an ethnographic study with teachers who experienced the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake in Bantul, Indonesia, this article contributes to a nascent body of literature on teachers' work, their vulnerability and resilience, and the importance of their voices during emergencies. As Marchezini (2015, 370) states, "It is necessary to look at survivors not merely as affected people, but as subjects with their own cultures and coping strategies." With insights from teachers' own narratives and the recurring concept of bangkit semangat (raise the spirits), I contend that the absence of teachers' voices from global policy and guidance means that we have an inadequate understanding of teachers' agency and fail to recognize their potential to realize, reimagine, and rework global recommendations at a local level.

Received January 4, 2023; revised March 27, 2023; accepted April 19, 2023; electronically published December 2023.

Journal on Education in Emergencies, Vol. 9, No. 1.
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ISSN 2518-6833

INTRODUCTION

As multiple recruitment and retention issues affect the teaching profession, the compounding effects of COVID-19 on teachers already burdened by conflict or sudden-onset disasters has redoubled our need to understand their experiences and include their perspectives in research, policymaking, and practice. At the recent United Nations Transforming Education Summit (TES), the discussion paper for Action Track 3 on Teachers, Teaching, and the Teaching Profession highlighted this view and emphasized the need to include teachers in social dialogue in order to improve policymaking and programming (TES 2022). While teachers' voices should be centered in education policy and practice, the requisite structural and institutional arrangements are often not in place for their voices to be heard or their perspectives acted on, especially in emergency settings (Bangs and Frost 2012). In practice, institutional partnerships wherein teachers can articulate their strengths and the complex challenges they face are vital to the development of intersectoral ways of working for children, adolescents, and their communities (Falk et al. 2022). Moreover, partnerships that value and respond to teachers' voices help to strengthen their sense of self-efficacy, which is a known factor in improving the learning and development outcomes of children and adolescents (Bandura 1994; Bangs and Frost 2012; Falk et al. 2022). In this light, COVID-19 and the TES summits have compelled my interest in our understanding of and resourcing for the myriad and pre-existing challenges of teachers' work in emergency settings, for which teachers' voices are key (INEE 2021; Mendenhall, Gomez, and Varni 2018).

Teachers are vital professionals but tentative leaders in the emergency response and recovery process. As such, humanitarian actors often sideline teachers' own expertise when formulating global policy and practice guidance (Mundy et al. 2020). Researchers in the education in emergencies (EiE) field have only recently introduced evidence on the ways teachers respond to and work within complex crises. At the same time, they are beginning to realize how rarely teachers' voices actually inform the policies and programs that relate most to their work (Adelman 2019; Dryden-Peterson 2022; Falk et al. 2022; Pherali et al. 2020). A lack of funding, researchers' poor access to teachers, teachers' workload, and tight contract timelines for consultants are oft-cited reasons for the omission of teachers' voices from technical guidance documents and policies (Ali 2018; Burns and Lawrie 2015; Falk et al. 2019; Kirk and Winthrop 2013; Mendenhall et al. 2018). As reflected in the recently published report titled *Teacher Wellbeing Resource Mapping and Gap Analysis* (INEE 2021, 27), this occurs because humanitarian agencies and consultants are only able to "talk to supervisors or managers but skip talking to teachers, who are the real experts."

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The Yogyakarta earthquake struck Bantul, Indonesia, at 5:54 AM on May 27, 2006, measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale. It claimed 5,778 lives, injured 36,299, and destroyed 900 schools (OCHA 2006; UNICEF 2006b; World Bank 2012). Using interview data from a 2016 ethnographic study with teachers (n=5) in Bantul, the epicenter of the quake, this article is my contribution to an emerging body of literature on teachers' work in emergency settings. Situated alongside a global-level framing of teachers' work during emergencies, I present a temporally and contextually situated account of teachers' experiences after a sudden-onset disaster. To achieve this, my research is guided by the following two questions: (1) How do teachers cope with the professional responsibilities of teaching in the aftermath of an environmental disaster? (2) What nuance and relevance can we gain when teachers' voices are included in the process of making global policy and practice?

To provide a practitioner-oriented narrative of teachers' work in complex emergencies, I aim to elevate and center the voices of Indonesian teachers from classrooms in postearthquake Bantul—what Khoja-Moolji (2017, 252) describes as a “subaltern epistemic position.” I employ the concepts of vulnerability and resilience as an analytical tool for understanding the duality of teachers' positionality in postdisaster settings, which in turn provides a conceptual grounding for my analysis of teachers' work in Bantul. I then introduce how teachers' work has been framed at the global level through a brief review of technical guidance documents produced before and following the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquakes. From my perspective as a practitioner-scholar, I contend that humanitarian actors have tended to frame teachers' work within a deficit paradigm by focusing more on what teachers cannot do and on what they lack and need, rather than on asking teachers what they value, what they are doing well, or how to institutionalize local capabilities most effectively in global policy and practice (Ali 2018; Pherali et al. 2020).

I then present my sample and the ethnographic methods I used to conduct my study. Following this, I introduce empirical findings from my critical discourse analysis (CDA) of five life-story interviews, which I facilitated with teachers who taught in Bantul. I then compare these findings with the themes that emerged from my review of EiE guidance documents, which brings forward the under-addressed realities of teachers' experiences and capabilities following sudden-onset disasters.

As my concluding discussion infers, I suggest that the EiE sector has been more influenced by global-level voices and the associated norms of “discourse communities”—within which a text is acceptable so long as it “represents the community episteme”—than by the insights of local-level teachers (Porter 1986, 39). Due to an oversight of teachers’ own capabilities and the misalignment of global guidance with local knowledge, I echo the TES Action Track 3 call for improved social dialogue between teachers, policymakers, and practitioners, from which the conceptualization and implementation of culturally and contextually responsive policies, programming, and practices should come.

CONCEPTUALIZING VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE IN POSTDISASTER SETTINGS

Disaster discourse has often reinforced pre-existing and unequal social arrangements between global and local actors (Bankoff 2007). Through this prioritization of expert global voices and corresponding technical terms, the global discourse reflects a hierarchical “politics of disaster” more than specific policies, practices, or perspectives at a local level (Button 1999). Moreover, disaster survivors are often rendered as passive individuals with minimal agency within the larger sociopolitical realm (Lavell 1994). In a Foucauldian sense, the postdisaster context is a site for biopolitics—a form of transnational and state governance of survivors’ bodies. Figuratively and literally, “salvation by external heroes” (Marchezini 2015, 365) becomes the prevailing narrative. In this sense, due to their elevated positionality within disaster response mechanisms, global-level actors can undermine local cultural knowledge as normative “best practices” take precedence.

A passive positioning of disaster survivors can come from the frequent use of the term “vulnerability” to situate individuals in postdisaster contexts. As the literature conveys, vulnerability exists when people lack sufficient adaptive capacity to anticipate, cope with, and recover from the impact of a disaster (Wisner 2006). At the same time, however, we can critique how vulnerability is employed, especially when it reinforces individuals’ marginality within disaster response systems and downplays the agency that affected individuals possess (Bankoff 2007). Thus, to the extent that humanitarian practitioners envisage their role as protecting individuals’ vulnerability, conceptualizing disaster-affected individuals this way also contributes to their stigmatization as “helpless victims of an unjust society” (Gaillard, Cadag, and Rampengan 2019, 864). In this regard, individuals are rendered vulnerable by the inequitable distribution of power and resources that exacerbate risk (Gaillard et al. 2019).

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Mirroring vulnerability, resilience is a state achieved by having strong local knowledge and effective systems to adapt to the conditions brought on by a disaster (Shah, Paulson, and Couch 2020). In global guidance documents, the concept of resilience refers to an individual's ability to "resist, absorb, accommodate, and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner" (UNDRR 2006, 27). Resilience is similarly framed as the ability to evolve in response to unexpected social and environmental changes (Robards and Alessa 2004). Moreover, introducing a capacities-based conceptualization, resilience can be seen as an individual's capacity to mitigate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stressors (USAID 2012, 5). As indicated, however, global guidance traditionally frames resilience as an individual trait more than a collective one.

A more recent iteration of resilience extends this model to include "transformative capacities," which refer to the collective "ability of communities and institutions to establish an enabling environment for systemic change" (Shah 2019, 26). A critique, however, is that the resilience paradigm assigns responsibility for recovery to the disaster-affected communities, which assuages policymakers' own liability for having created disaster risks through inequitable resourcing or political anomie (Barrios 2016; O'Malley 2010). For actors in a position of power, the concept can divert attention away from systemic sources of vulnerability, such as poor disaster mitigation measures or the disenfranchisement of communities. In such cases, resilience acts like a Band-Aid and fails to ameliorate the root causes of risk (Barrios 2016; Shah 2019).

Structural challenges notwithstanding, so-called vulnerable individuals can still have the agency to rise above the shortcomings of the government and humanitarian sectors to provide community-level services, even with limited resources (Shah et al. 2020). In this sense, individuals who are positioned as having low resilience are in fact highly resilient and agentic, especially when they improvise in the face of overwhelming odds (Bandura 1994; Barrios 2016). Understanding resilience in this way echoes how it can be the reason a community is able to build back better (Oliver-Smith 2015; Schuller 2016; Shah et al. 2020). While the mantra "build back better" can hide "deeply seeded structural inequalities" (Shah and Lopes Cardozo 2014, 10), communities can also see a crisis as an opportunity to leverage available support or resources to improve physical infrastructure and social support systems. In such circumstances, the idealization of resilience can carry inherent risk. When schools are vulnerable to protracted or recurring hazards and political anomie, we need to ask what it is that resilient but marginalized teachers are actually building back to. As Schuller (2016) asks, "is it a condition of disaster vulnerability, underdevelopment, and dependence?" (cited in Barrios

2016, 31). Or might cultural knowledge, the experience of disaster, and teachers' agency determine new ways of building forward?

EiE GUIDANCE ON SCHOOLING AND TEACHERS' WORK

Based on global guidance from the decade following the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake, which coincides with the consolidation of EiE as a discrete field (Winthrop and Matsui 2013), I pay particular attention to how vulnerability and resilience coalesce to position teachers as either agentic professionals in emergencies, or as passive victims within a deficit paradigm who are in need of support. It is also important to note the discursive and negotiated nature of global guidance at the local level, which includes teachers' resistance to globally imposed norms as a form of local agency and resilience (Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson 2015; Smith and Henderson 2022).

To the extent that schooling during emergencies provides safe and inclusive education and psychosocial support, such functions are not possible without the expertise and resilience of the teachers, whose own needs have historically been under-addressed in EiE funding, policy, and practice. In global guidance from the time of the Yogyakarta earthquake, much of which still resonates, schools are positioned to provide children and adolescents with the knowledge and skills needed to respond to the challenges that complex emergencies present. Schooling is also promoted as a symbol of normalcy, in that it provides the everyday routines around which social stability can be achieved (INEE 2010; Burns and Lawrie 2015; UNICEF 2006a; UNDRR 2006). Moreover, as outlined by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF 2006a), by providing social-emotional learning and psychosocial support, teachers help children and adolescents regulate the trauma experienced during an emergency. On such occasions, teachers are expected to provide "shape and structure to children's lives and instill community values" (UNICEF 2006a, 18). The Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards (2010) also promote this notion, in that being able to attend school promotes dignity among traumatized children and adolescents, as it provides safe learning spaces and access to psychosocial and protection referral mechanisms.

In sudden-onset emergencies, teachers' work deviates from the norm, as the disruption creates additional psychosocial challenges that need to be incorporated into regular learning programs. This context thus "presents opportunities to build back better by introducing innovations and changes to the system, curriculum,

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and learning practices” (UNICEF 2006a, 6). However, in technical guidance documents, the theme of teachers needing professional development support to realize these opportunities is prevalent, with only rare mention of teachers' existing knowledge, capabilities, or strategies. Participatory approaches are more commonly promoted, such as UNICEF's (2006a, 71) encouragement of humanitarian actors to work with teachers to “develop creative ways of providing learning opportunities in the new conditions.” UNICEF also guides practitioners to coach teachers in “life skills and psychosocial support based on culture- and community-specific ways of dealing with stress and trauma” (73).

Teachers who suddenly find themselves in an emergency setting will often question their own efficacy, which can lead to the erosion of morale and professional engagement (Burns and Lawrie 2015). For example, a recurring theme is the need for teachers to provide psychosocial and social-emotional support to children, either as service leaders or in making referrals to child-protection professionals. A role for teachers in this instance is to provide a program of teaching and learning within a predictable and routine structure (INEE 2010). However, global guidance also refers to the additional vulnerabilities teachers must contend with, citing their struggle to uphold the minimal expectations of humanitarian actors because they lack access to adequate “pre-service preparation, in-service training, or in-service support” (Burns and Lawrie 2015, 19).

Echoing the conceptualizations offered above in terms of understanding teachers' vulnerabilities, INEE (2010, 9) defines them as “a characteristic or circumstance that makes [teachers] more susceptible to the damaging effects of a disaster.” Adding to this, the environmental and socioeconomic contexts in which teachers work play a role in determining the degree of vulnerability they experience (INEE 2010). Structural factors, such as low and irregular pay or poor working conditions, also prompt many teachers to look for alternative employment and demotivate them from making any additional effort to bolster their skills (Mendenhall, Pacifico, and Hu 2019).

Within these framings, in which teachers' voices are entirely absent, we rarely encourage consideration of the cultural assets or support systems that enable many teachers to prevail, despite their untenable work conditions. Nor is there guidance encouraging the inclusion of teachers in policy and practice decisionmaking. As such, when we consider teachers' capacities and capabilities during emergencies—which include family, community, and faith-based structures and networks—we need to understand how the “expected” and “expanded” scope of teachers' roles is conceived of and supported (Falk 2023; Mendenhall et al. 2019). We also need

to contemplate how the inclusion of teachers' voices can bridge the underserved spaces between global guidance and local practice (Reyes, Kelcey, and Diaz Varela 2013).

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Due to intersecting political and geophysical emergencies, this study is situated in a period of profound vulnerability and global intervention in economically and politically peripheral parts of Indonesia. At 7:28 AM on December 24, 2004, the Indian Ocean Tsunami struck the coast of Aceh on the island of Sumatra, killing an estimated 220,000 people and causing an unprecedented influx of international humanitarian agencies. Just 18 months later, at 5:54 AM on May 27, 2006, a shallow magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck the town of Bantul, which had a population of 64,000, just ten kilometers south of Yogyakarta city on the island of Java. In total, 5,778 people across the Yogyakarta region were killed and 70 percent of Bantul's population was displaced (World Bank 2012). Just before these events, following an already fractious process of education system decentralization through Education Act 20/2003, in which decisionmaking authority was transferred from Jakarta to the local *kabupaten* (subnational administrators), the Indonesian government had begun to implement Teacher Law 14/2006. This policy sought to improve the status of Indonesian teachers in order to elevate expectations for teachers' work and to influence student achievement and national development (Jalal et al. 2009).

Prior to the fall of President Suharto in 1998, which marked the start of the country's transition from 30 years of autocratic and centralized rule to a decentralized democracy, there was minimal focus on skills-based teaching (Bjork 2004). Instead, value was placed on the dimensions of teachers' work that related to civic duty and public order. A teacher under Suharto's paternalistic *Orde Baru* (New Order) regime demonstrated competence through *kesetiaan* (loyalty), *tanggung jawab* (responsibility), *ketautan* (obedience), *kerjasama* (cooperation), and *kejujuran* (honesty) (Bjork 2004). As civil servants, teachers answered to Suharto's government first, not to students or parental boards (Bjork 2004). In policy, practice, and public discourse, teachers of this era were state functionaries who were positioned as transmitters of directives from central superiors, rather than as representatives of their communities (Nilan 2003; Sriprakash 2011). Although teachers were grossly underpaid, they were not undervalued by the communities they worked in. Although teachers often took other jobs to make

ends meet, they were not without political and social commitment to their teaching duties (Nilan 2003). By 2006, the pressure to find additional work and the residual mindset of the previous government's designations mitigated teachers' capacity to act as agents of change in a rapidly reforming post-Suharto state. As Bjork (2004) highlights, a teacher who subscribed to Orde Baru values was more likely to receive recognition and tangible rewards than a teacher with individual leadership skills, initiative, or a learner-centered approach.

METHODS

This study, which focuses on the nature of teachers' work immediately following a sudden-onset disaster, learns from the narratives of five Indonesian teachers. To produce a teacher-centered and practitioner-oriented analysis of teachers' own framings of their work, my approach provides a contextually and culturally situated understanding of the tensions between global constructions of teachers' work and their own lived experiences, capabilities, and needs.

The method I used in Indonesia was the individual life-story interview. Given the complex nature of the narratives I sought, life-story interviews "bring order to our experiences and help us to view our lives both subjectively and objectively while at the same time assisting us in forming our identities" (Atkinson 2001, 122). Supplementing this view, and pointing to the interacting layers of influence the participants conveyed, life-story interviewing also provided a "nuanced view of people's past or present experience," which helped illustrate the ways teachers' narratives link with wider history and politics (Lewis 2008, 126).

In developing a grounded understanding of Indonesian teachers' experiences in a period of protracted vulnerability, Ryen (2001, 14) states that "social reality and how we talk about reality are intertwined." As such, through life-story interviews and a semiparticipatory process in which the teachers decided where the interviews took place and defined the themes we focused on, they were able to contribute to the research and knowledge production process. In this setting, it was also critical that my methods reflected culturally compatible processes that participants could comfortably relate to, contribute to, and gain insight from.

To navigate these issues and provide space for narratives from a “subaltern epistemic location,” I used a Javanese concept to communicate my semistructured interview approach to participants (Khoja-Moolji 2017). *Ngobrol-ngobrol* refers to a familiar and everyday style of conversation in communal spaces that is fluid and colloquial yet leads toward critical issues and resolutions. In choosing this term, I drew guidance from *talanoa*, which is an indigenous and decolonial method used throughout the South Pacific (Koya 2013; Tuhiwai Smith 2012; Vaioleti 2006). By engaging with *talanoa*, researchers are required to “partake deeply in the experience” rather than asking predetermined questions, to listen, and to step back to analyze (Vaioleti 2006, 24). I also used *ngobrol-ngobrol* to promote a grounded and inductive way of gathering data in a “comfortable, non-threatening manner” (Koya 2013, 141) that was familiar to the participants and helped create a space defined by their own terms of engagement.

I used CDA to analyze my findings. This enabled me to demarcate themes, to code and enumerate dominant representations, and to delineate frames of reference from the *ngobrol-ngobrol*. CDA also enabled me to analyze “opaque and transparent” dialectics between actors, institutions, and contexts that emerge in the postdisaster setting (Shah and Lopes Cardoso 2014; Wodak 2006). Similarly, as a tool for juxtaposing teacher narratives and global guidance, CDA enabled me to push beyond the nuances conveyed and move toward a more complex analysis of how the interviews reflect local social norms in the form of beliefs, concepts, and practices (Rogers 2004).

My interview sample included five participants (two females, three males) from the district of Bantul, who were selected to take part in hour-long, individual life-story interviews over a six-week period in 2016. The interviews were framed in my recruitment advertisements as *ngobrol-ngobrol* (conversations). Posters were distributed via the local teacher association and placed in seven staff rooms across a purposive sample of large and small elementary schools in a mix of semi-urban and rural locations. Due to my own funding constraints, time limitations, and the period needed to build appropriate relational trust, only five participants out of twelve volunteers were selected for interviews. Thus, these findings are not representative. Selection criteria related to their personal proximity to the 2006 earthquake, their diverse range of experience and roles in their respective schools, the mix of semi-urban and rural locations, and to achieve gender balance.

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Table 1: Research Participants from Bantul District, Yogyakarta

Name*	Gender	Age	Faith	Years Teaching	School Setting	Grade-Level Taught
Ibu Rita	F	53	Catholic	25	Semi-urban	3rd
Ibu Maya	F	36	Islam	11	Rural	5th
Pak Johor	M	55	Islam	22	Rural	Principal
Pak Faris	M	48	Islam	24	Semi-urban	6th
Pak Zihairi	M	46	Islam	21	Semi-urban	5th

Note: * indicates pseudonyms

I cofacilitated each of the five life-story interviews in the Indonesian language, with support from Pak Siswa Widyatmoko of Universitas Sanata Dharma in Yogyakarta. I then produced translated transcriptions in English, along with annotated field notes. After that I uploaded dual-language transcripts to NVivo for open coding, closed coding, and discourse analysis (Saldaña 2015). Across the transcripts, I enumerated recurring emic terms and organized participant statements into three emergent literature-informed etic categories. Based on my literature review and post-hoc consultations with teachers, three distinct but interconnected themes frame my findings: (1) teachers' memories of the earthquake; (2) teachers' values and beliefs; and (3) teachers' priorities and activities.

The data used for this article come from a larger study on teachers' work at the intersection of Indonesia's globally influenced policy reforms and disaster vulnerability in the early 2000s. My own positionality within this research invariably influenced my approach to the interviews, the teachers' interactions with me as a researcher, and my interpretation of the findings. Before conducting this study, I worked as a development consultant on teacher professional development projects in Indonesia for three years, and I speak Indonesian with confidence. Moreover, I was a teacher in New Zealand in 2011, when a series of earthquakes devastated Christchurch city, closed my school, and significantly disrupted teachers' work and wellbeing. I provided this backstory to the research participants, which created a sense of common understanding and enhanced their confidence in my research intentions. Finally, as a current producer of technical guidance for international humanitarian agencies, my analysis is inherently reflexive and self-critical.

FINDINGS

TEACHERS' MEMORIES OF THE EARTHQUAKE

In relaying what happened after 5:54 AM on May 27, 2006, all teachers described the *goyang-goyang* (violent shaking) and related its severity to their distance from the epicenter. This was a visceral memory for them. As Pak Zihairi conveyed, he lived beyond the Bantul epicenter, which lessened the severity of the quake: "I experienced just the shaking, but not the full power of the epicenter. In Bantul it was more powerful...so many victims there died of falling objects." Teachers also described *hancur dan robloh* (destruction and collapse). Ibu Maya recalled her ability to run outside as her house collapsed around her. She related the collapse of the school to the fact that children lacked a safe place to come together in the community. She also recalled having to live in a tent for many weeks with collapsed houses all around her while she tried to work. Ibu Rita encouraged me to picture the physical environment as she described running errands among the detritus of upended lives. Pak Faris was resigned to the fact that his school was destroyed because of the community's relative poverty, stating that "the buildings were very old and poorly maintained, so of course they collapsed."

In the early parts of our conversations, *lari* (run) was a frequent reference. Running away from harm was presented as a matter of the magnitude of the event, the participants' physical safety, and their emotional recovery. As Ibu Rita remembered, the *goyang-goyang* (shaking) was so strong that she was unable to run. Ibu Maya and Pak Johor referred to running as a way of escaping a possible tsunami, even though Bantul is 20 kilometers from the coast. The teachers reminded me that the 2004 tsunami in Aceh still weighed heavily on their minds. As Ibu Maya shared, "Whenever there were aftershocks, we would run in panic to higher ground...I only felt safe when I reached the mountain." Pak Johor refers to "the north" as the place he ran to where there is higher ground, and where he felt safe from the violent aftershocks. Pak Faris, on the other hand, talked about needing to "run away from the community for a while," which referred to his neighbors and colleagues as well as the physical environment responsible for his hardship. Ibu Rita also referred to running away. She went to stay with her daughter in Salatiga, 95 kilometers from Bantul. Both Rita and Faris then explained that they only returned to Bantul once they felt "recovered and prepared."

Surprisingly, across all five interviews, the term *korban* (victim) was not as significant as I anticipated, even when I asked if participants considered themselves to be victims. When it was used, however, it was in reference to colleagues and community members affected by the earthquake, rather than to the teachers themselves. But the word's meaning also ranged across a spectrum. Ibu Rita and Pak Johor used *korban* most often. Pak Johor stated that "when we say we are *korban* it's not all the same...Some people experienced their houses collapsing, their bodies broke, or they died, or maybe they had many family members perish, maybe then it's different to my experience, maybe they are more broken than me personally...So in that respect I am not a victim." Pak Zihairi similarly described how "there were so many gravesites dug in the fields for victims...it was like the earthquake ate them all up." Pak Faris, on the other hand, spoke of his resistance to being a victim, yet stated that being a victim was inevitable, as the situation was so much bigger than Bantul: "It was easy to become hopeless...so we all became victims...we had to make an effort to accept the calamity all around us." Interestingly, Pak Faris' Indonesian phrasing conveyed the situation as a divine plan. As such, his spiritual acceptance of the situation mitigated his victimhood. Ibu Maya, however, was more direct about who was a victim. She singled out her grade-two class at the time: "One of my students died. It was a young girl who had only just become part of the class, which made us all victims, really." She also distinguished that, while some children were not "victims of injuries, we had to keep in mind that their parents had died."

Like *korban* (victim), the participants did not use the word "trauma" as often as I expected, even when I probed for examples of trauma. When they did use it, Ibu Rita and Ibu Maya broke into laughter, which I interpreted as a way of coping with difficult memories or as an expression of discomfort. For example, Maya burst out laughing when she said that the earthquake "even made brave men less brave, as they already had a lot of trauma to deal with." She also spoke with a joyful tone when describing her main role as "lifting the students' spirits for learning...so that they lost the feeling of fear and recovered from the trauma of the quake." Ibu Rita recalled the challenge of going back to school while still dealing with her own trauma. As she narrated, she laughed loudly and slapped her khaki covered knee, as if amused by the absurd memory of teaching amid her own despair. Pak Johor was somber by comparison. He remembered that "we were experiencing so many aftershocks...[that] for months the situation was very traumatic." Pak Faris' use of trauma related more to the teaching rationale at the time: "We did not rush straight for mathematics or Indonesian language lessons...because we first had to help the students manage their trauma."

A final word that appears often within this theme is *putus asa* (hopeless). However, all participants framed *putus asa* from a position of avoidance. In other words, no matter how difficult the situation became they could not become *putus asa* (hopeless). Ibu Rita used *putus asa* on numerous occasions to explain her focus at the time, reflecting that “you cannot surrender, you cannot despair...Our work, it’s about providing spirit, about not feeling hopeless.” Pak Zihairi quipped that this is a feature of Javanese culture. As he explained, “This is what we’re like...that’s what teachers stick to, we don’t become hopeless...If we do we become victims, too.” What is insightful here is the teachers’ discomfort with being considered *korban* (victims) of the earthquake.

TEACHERS’ VALUES AND BELIEFS

Ibu Maya regularly used the word *bangkit* (to rise) during our conversation. This came from her affinity with the saying “*bangkit dari kejadian*” (“rise above the situation”), which she said “became like a national belief.” This harks back to the Suharto-era culture of teachers transmitting government directives, as well as reflecting broader Javanese beliefs, as each teacher repeated similar phrases during our conversations. Ibu Maya extended the notion of rising up to include the act of rebuilding, stating that first “we had to lift each other’s spirits,” and then that “the way we rise up is the way we rebuild our schools and homes, that’s how we show that we can stand up for ourselves.” While none of the men used *bangkit* as much as their female counterparts, both used the similar term *berusaha* (enterprise) to describe their beliefs about teachers’ work postdisaster. As Pak Johor commented, “to keep your spirits up, you must be enterprising, you must accept the challenge in front of you.” Pak Faris saw also enterprise as a mental exercise. He stated that “one requires enterprise to move beyond the calamity all around.” None of the participants described rising up or being enterprising as specific mental health strategies. However, both terms connect with ideas of agency and self-efficacy as related to concepts of teacher wellbeing in an emergency.

Pak Johor, who was the oldest and most earnest participant, reflected on Japan’s occupation of Indonesia during World War II. He used the Indonesian transliteration *kolonialisme* (colonialism) to describe this time and attributed to it a sense of unity among Indonesians: “After the earthquake it was a very hard time, but we also had colonialism before...It was over 50 years ago, but it made Indonesians united.” He continued, “To overthrow Japan we had to be united... so I think our strength comes from this.” A second term Pak Johor used often is *kesatuan* (united), which holds prominence in the Indonesian psyche and is based on *sumpah pemuda* (the youth pledge), also known as Indonesia’s document of

independence from 150 years of Dutch colonialism, which occurred in 1965. Despite its paradoxical association with the Orde Baru anticommunist pogroms of 1965, in which approximately one million people were massacred, many Indonesians to this day offer their allegiance to the national motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*," which means "Unity in Diversity" in old Javanese. As Pak Johor uncritically stated, *kesatuan* "is like an adhesive, it allowed us to become independent...and until now we have not been colonized again." Pak Faris similarly believed that his community "has a way of moving forward in a united way."

A sense of pride in the opportunity to promote Javanese culture and what Indonesian anthropologist Tania Li (2007) terms as the ubiquitous "will to improve" colored many of my conversations with the participants. Building on the concepts above, Pak Johor referred to the importance of *gotong-royong* (reciprocal aid), which he believed is a product of the *sumpah pemuda* generation. Rita mirrored Johor's centering of *gotong-royong* alongside her Javanese identity, stating that, "when disasters strike, you need to carry Javanese proverbs with you...stories of mutual dependence, tales of togetherness in particular." Pak Faris also believed that *kebudayaan Jawa* (Javanese culture) was key to their response: "It is a fact that Javanese people support each other, we help each other out." Ibu Maya framed her heritage differently. She claimed that "Javanese people, we do not dwell on painful memories like this." She then positioned her Javanese and professional identities within a taxonomy: "First I am a Muslim, then I am Javanese, next I am a mother and a wife, and only then am I a teacher." This comment stood out, as global guidance often privileges professional identities over personal, spiritual, or domestic ones. Maya's comment reminds us not only of her full identity, but also of how her primary sociocultural affiliations are presented as assets for her work.

At the same time as it centers the importance of schools in the postdisaster context, technical guidance at the global level often silos education, health, or child-protection priorities, thereby isolating schools from other institutions or wider sociopolitical considerations. On this point, the participants introduced *masyarakat* (society) into our conversations. Pak Faris noted that teachers' roles "are about more than students, we work for the whole of society." Or, as Pak Zihairi articulated, "as teachers we are a part of society, and we therefore support the society with our efforts." After a brief pause, he explained more fully: "Because we are teachers, we are leaders in school, and because the school is part of the community, we are leaders in the community, too." These comments read like remnants of the Suharto-era teacher competency frameworks when,

as “state functionaries,” teachers’ collective *kesetian* (loyalty), *tanggung jawab* (responsibility), and *kerjasama* (cooperation) were better recognized and rewarded than individual critical thinking or creativity.

Referring to first responders from the military, health, and child-protection sectors, Pak Zihairi also noted that teachers’ work “complements others’ roles during a crisis.” This speaks to the idea that teachers are also frontline workers in a crisis, but contradicts the fact that many teachers left the community after the quake. Nevertheless, Pak Faris took a longer-term view of teachers’ work and influence. He offered the logic that “our community was burdened with the impact of the quake, and if children did not pass their national exams they might never rise, and they would become a burden to society.”

TEACHERS’ PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES

Ibu Maya regularly referred to *bantuan* (help). Her use of the term was not in the passive sense of being helped but in the active sense of helping or getting help for others. As Ibu Maya stated, “We got the fire service and the police to help... They assisted with getting people like my grandmother away from the rubble... In our village I lost 43 friends...so we were forced to bring in extra help.” Ibu Maya also framed getting help as a way of being able to “shift your focus to the school.” At the same time, she noted that the school was the site “where people were coming together to help each other out.” When I asked whether external help made a difference, she was adamant that I understood how “we cleaned up, we organized our belongings, but we didn’t wait around for help.” Ibu Rita often used *bantuan* in a similar way, stating that “our role was all about finding the right help for people in our community.” Ibu Rita was well connected to a network of Catholic churches, so she focused on coordinating help from congregants: “We could try and find help from private donors...I was able to find people to help from the churches.” Ibu Rita believed that people’s wellbeing depended on their own social networks. She saw teachers as brokers of help, from private donors as well as government services. As she stated, “If teachers or your school did not have networks, you would not get help, this included from the government also.”

Pak Faris also referred to *bantuan* (help), albeit in a slightly different way. He noted how difficult it was to provide help amid such difficulty: “Before we could help others, we had to come to terms with the many deaths all around us.” For Pak Faris, this created tension, a cultural trait that was difficult to reconcile with his present reality: “In Java we feel compelled to help each other out, but maybe we cannot in the middle of such calamity?”

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I was surprised by how infrequently the words *mengajar dan belajar* (teaching and learning) were used in relation to teachers' decisionmaking after the earthquake. This points to teachers seeing their roles more broadly than academic development alone. In many ways, perhaps due to the scripted nature of Indonesia's curriculum, teaching and learning are things the teachers had little control over. Therefore, the extent to which the participants could comment on decisions around teaching and learning was limited. At first, this lack of commentary contrasted with their emphasis on supporting students' success on exams amid the disaster's disruptive effects. The way they talked about *mengajar dan belajar* spoke more to the psychosocial and social-emotional preparedness needed so that teachers could teach and children could learn. This was also how they saw humanitarian agencies. For example, Pak Faris described how "different agencies helped us set up activities for learning...They happened near the field, they raised the emergency tents, meaning we could teach again...Once help arrived, we could teach some great stuff." Ibu Maya stated similarly that, "before we could help with teaching and learning, we had to help the head of school to raise students' spirits."

Along with teaching and learning, teachers emphasized the importance of *hiburan* (entertainment). They felt *hiburan* was key to getting children back to school, and this was one of the few times they referred to international humanitarian agencies. As Ibu Maya recalled, "They started to provide entertainment for the children at school and then children would return home but want to come back to school again for the entertainment." Pak Zihairi also saw *hiburan* as key to children's psychosocial wellbeing and to teachers' wellbeing as well. As he stated, "The main thing to do was to make sure children were ok, that they were entertained and happy, and I feel some of us also did better if we did that for them." Pak Faris agreed that, in terms of teachers' work immediately after the quake, "it was just the basics; providing motivation and entertainment was our main job." Across all five *ngobrol-ngobrol* (conversations), whether we talked about work roles, trauma, help offered, or teaching and learning, the word that was used time and again with utility and versatility was *semangat* (spirit). More often than not, *semangat* was paired with *bangkit* (rise), in that teachers' work immediately after the earthquake was to *bangkit semangat* (raise the spirits).

Ibu Maya relayed that, because "we still had exams coming up and students had to progress to the next level," her main role was "to raise spirits and keep children learning, even if it was in a field under a tree." But she also related *semangat* (spirits) to students' psychosocial needs: "I raised their spirits so that they lost their fear and trauma." After hearing many participants use *semangat*, I

asked where the concept originated. Ibu Maya replied, “from all the government response centers to our schools, it was the same message: ‘Let’s rise up...raise the spirit!’ is all we heard from them.”

Ibu Rita also used *semangat* multiple times in our conversation. At the outset of our *ngobrol-ngobrol* (conversations), she said that “our neighborhood had very little, but...we still had our spirits, we were still breathing.” Later in the conversation she also reflected on teachers’ collective effort to raise the community’s spirits, stating that, “when help finally arrived, they found that we could already rise up, that we already had the spirit to help ourselves.” On this note she added, “We weren’t broken...we just had to keep going, keep teaching together, and that’s what we did.”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

I contend in this article that, in the guidance, humanitarian actors in the field of EiE have positioned the work, identity, and capabilities of teachers within a deficit paradigm, while paradoxically centering their importance to disaster preparedness, response, and the recovery process. Given the consequences of current political, health, and environmental crises and the many human resource issues that humanitarian agencies are facing, humanitarian actors are compelled to recommend improved teacher development and performance. Humanitarian actors’ involvement in complex emergencies is predicated on the identification of gaps and the provision of funding and solutions—what Li (2007, 7) critiques as the “the practices of problematization.” Thus, the frames of reference that humanitarian actors employ illustrate a gap between teachers’ perceived capacity to perform and the level of performance required to achieve best practice norms. The complex dynamics of emergency settings can therefore lead to the creation of a passive sense of dependency, which in turn strengthens the humanitarian sector’s own influence at the local and global levels.

As stated earlier, Porter (1986) refers to the producers of global texts as belonging to discourse communities. In this sense, as authors of policy and practice guidance, humanitarian actors are constrained by “intertextual preferences” (44). It is apparent, therefore, given the similar frames of reference and the positioning of teachers in emergency settings, that global guidance is bound by shared ideologies and standards rather than by the nuance and capabilities of the contexts they represent. As a consequence, and as Alfaro (1996, 268) suggests, because “texts are subliminal purveyors of ideology” they “influence and alter the subject.”

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The EiE guidance we produce therefore defines for global audiences how teachers' work is conceived of and supported. But a key detail missing from this guidance is how teachers conceive of and value their own experiences, define the nature of their own work, and articulate the policy- and practice-level support they need. Although the values and actions of the Indonesian teachers interviewed for this study overlap with global guidance, they refrained from presenting themselves as vulnerable or deficient. Moreover, if humanitarian actors observed intently and listened closely to subaltern perspectives, it might become clear to them that global recommendations can be realized in local and culturally unique ways. For, as Marchezini (2015, 370) states, "it is necessary to look at survivors not merely as affected people, but as subjects with their own cultures and coping strategies."

In this research, I endeavored to answer the following questions: (1) How do teachers cope with the professional responsibilities of teaching in the aftermath of an environmental disaster? (2) What nuance and relevance might we gain when teachers' voices are included in the process of global policymaking and practice? To the extent that this research seeks to make the value of teachers' voices in EiE guidance clear, it also highlights the value of working with and building on teachers' own cultural norms. Cultural factors such as kinship, shared history, faith, and ethnicity are known to bind people together and to inform collective action in a time of crisis (Maldonado 2016; Shah et al. 2020). In local communities we find complex networks, knowledge of how things get accomplished, "the intricacies of local politics," and systems of reciprocal aid that can be strengthened by global actors, and they should not be not overlooked (Maldonado 2016, 52). Indeed, just as *bangkit semangat* (raise the spirits) resonates with Indonesian teachers, culturally located framings of vulnerability and resilience can effectively guide the disaster preparedness, response, and recovery processes of humanitarian actors as well. Moreover, this research shines light on transformative capacities and the extent to which cultural assets can be incorporated into policymaking and practice (Khoja-Moolji 2017; Pherali et al. 2020; Shah 2019). As such, there is an opportunity for future research to investigate how locally derived and culturally grounded concepts can inform teacher professional development and support mechanisms, and the extent to which, if at all, this has a transformative effect on teachers' resilience, motivation, and retention during emergencies.

To the extent that vulnerability and resilience can frame the duality of teachers' work and agency in emergency settings, the teachers I interviewed contested their own vulnerability. They also did not use *ketahanan*, the Indonesian term for resilience. The closest they came was to describe an acceptance of the situation and the desire to rise up and move forward together. Through the government-inspired

mantra of *bangkit semangat*, the teachers outlined the collective cultural and psychological resources they had to navigate the complexities of the postdisaster context. The memories and issues the teachers chose to share thus reveal a collective yet cautious and fragmented sense of agency and capability amid the disruption and material deprivations before them.

The teachers also talked about their own self-efficacy in the ways they helped students and others, acts that were identity affirming and rewarding. This showed that they had community and family connectedness that included elements of spiritual faith and an understanding of shared histories (Maldonato 2016). Each teacher experienced and compartmentalized memories of considerable trauma and loss, but this rarely became the focus of our *ngobrol-ngobrol* (conversations). Like Pak Johor's reference to a shared colonial history, Ibu Maya's personal taxonomy of her many identities, and the residual influence of Suharto-era directives, what these teachers shared are the ways in which multiple social and cultural factors intersected to provide them and their colleagues with a sense of collective resilience. As such, to the extent that global texts champion teachers as frontline professionals, humanitarian actors need to prioritize and uplift—or *bangkit semangat*—teachers as contributors to and collaborators in nuanced and contextually connected policy and practice.

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