

Literary Pathways to Resilience: Navigating Bullying Through Comparative American and Indonesian Picture Books

Geni Kurniati¹

Christy Tisnawijaya²

¹² English Literature Department, Universitas Pamulang, Indonesia

dosen01935@unpam.ac.id

Abstract

Bullying remains a pervasive global concern, exerting profound adverse effects on psychological well-being. This emotional toll is particularly true for children, who may not have the tools to cope with constant harassment because they are still developing emotional coping skills. To assist children navigating these challenges, picture books can provide meaningful opportunities to develop empathy, emotional awareness, and resilience. This study investigates how children's literature functions as a medium for fostering resilience. Employing a Most Different Systems Design (MDSD) lens combined with a qualitative literary analysis approach, this study examines four picture books from the classic American series by Wilhelm and volume 2 *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* from the contemporary Indonesian series by Ideo and Ideo. These works were selected because they represent distinct cultural, historical, educational paradigms, and publishing contexts while addressing the shared issue of bullying and emphasizing resilience as an essential life skill for young readers. This study interrogates narrative structures and illustrative elements that communicate resilience, emotional growth, and coping strategies. The findings reveal that both convergences and variations across the two bodies of literary work. In both contexts, the picture books portray negative emotions as valid responses to bullying and provide strategies for responding to adversity. However, the works differ in how conflicts are resolved – including through retaliation, support from peers, and assistance from adults. While the MDSD framework provides a basis for examining these patterns comparatively, the similarities and differences illustrate how resilience can be represented through narrative and illustrative approaches across contrasting contexts. The study suggests that picture books offer potential pedagogical resources for representing emotional experiences and coping strategies related to bullying.

Keywords: *bullying, children's literature, comparative literature, picture books, resilience*

Introduction

The concerning number of suicide cases among Indonesian students is an alarming issue that demands immediate and comprehensive attention. According to the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI, 2023), there were at least 37 documented suicide cases among students in elementary, junior high, and high schools between January and November 2023. This tragic trend is in line with global statistics from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2025), which reported that over 720,000 individuals take their own lives annually, with a notable concentration in the 15–29 age group (2025). Such tragic outcomes often stem from severe depression triggered by various factors, including violence, abuse, discrimination, conflict, illness, natural disasters, and financial pressures (WHO, 2025). The growing number of student suicides in Indonesia is a public health crisis that has a profound impact on children's safety, education, and mental health. Although the global 15–29 age group encompasses a

broader population than the children and young adults represented in this study, the data highlights the broader significance of addressing emotional well-being and coping with adversity among young people.

KPAI has noted a troubling pattern of student suicides at all school levels, with bullying emerging as a significant contributing factor. According to a 2023 KPAI report, bullying both traditional and cyber is closely associated with psychological distress, depression, and suicidal thoughts. This finding shows that bullying as one of the most prevalent risks to Indonesia's youth, particularly in school settings where cases often go unreported to the police. The report also highlighted other issues that threaten children's well-being, such as discrimination due to unpaid tuition and harmful school policies. In addition to bullying, the report documented 240 cases of physical and psychological abuse and 41 cases of digital crimes, with cyberbullying being the most commonly reported (KPAI, 2025). These statistics underscore the critical link between hostile school environments and the declining mental health of students.

The pervasiveness of this issue is further highlighted by data from the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2020), which found that two-thirds of boys and girls aged 13–17 report experiences of at least one type of violence. Notably, three-quarters of children and adolescents who have faced violence indicate that their perpetrators were often friends or peers. Furthermore, a concerning 41% of 15-year-old students experience bullying at least once a month in various forms, including physical aggression, social exclusion, and name-calling, while 45% of surveyed youth have encountered cyberbullying. A significant contributor to this mental health crisis is bullying, both verbal and physical, which has been identified as a primary risk factor for suicide among young people (Chen et al., 2020; Kim & Ko, 2021; Yosep et al., 2024).

Bullying is defined as "persistent threatening and aggressive physical behavior or verbal abuse directed toward other people, especially those who are younger, smaller, weaker, or in some other situation of relative disadvantage" (APA, 2025a). On the other hand, cyberbullying involves "verbally threatening or harassing behavior conducted through electronic technology, such as cell phones, email, and text messaging" (APA, 2025a). Ironically, the educational environment, particularly schools and universities, is becoming increasingly unsafe for students, who often feel psychologically distressed due to bullying related to physical appearance, sexual orientation, or toxic seniority (Munira et al., 2023). It is essential to understand that bullying behaviors do not emerge in isolation; they are shaped by a complex interplay of societal, educational, and systemic factors (Norman, 2020). Interventions to combat bullying must extend beyond the school setting to encompass a holistic approach (Olweus et al., 2019). Parenting styles also play a critical role in influencing bullying behaviors among children (Krisnana et al., 2021), while effective school policies that address bullying cases can significantly mitigate the issue (Sun et al., 2024).

Given that suicide is one of the leading causes of mortality for young people worldwide and bullying is a recognized risk factor, quick and effective action is necessary. While established frameworks like the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP), which implements an anti-bullying curriculum and facilitates open discussions (Olweus et al., 2019), are crucial, some scholars argue that they often focus on managing behavior rather than building internal strengths (Divecha & Brackett, 2020; Rawana et al., 2011). The four core principles of the OBPP emphasize the need for adults to show warmth, set clear limits, consistently reinforce positive behavior, and serve as positive role models (Olweus et al., 2019, p. 2). However, to truly combat the devastating effects

of bullying, it is equally essential to develop “Character Strengths” in students from a young age (Turner et al., 2023, p. 21). Cultivating resilience and encouraging values of self-regulation should begin in early childhood education (Callow, 2020). In classroom settings, implementing strategies such as role play can significantly enhance awareness and foster discussions aimed at preventing bullying (Donohoe, 2019).

In addition to cultivating resilience, reading picture books, particularly when supported by discussion, is a powerful pathway for enhancing young readers' critical thinking skills. Picture books provide a multimodal learning experience where children must actively construct meaning by integrating textual and visual elements (Nikolajeva, 2002; Rindengan, 2023). This process naturally pushes children beyond passive reading into deeper engagement. Reading and discussing picture books help to develop various higher-order thinking skills essential for critical analysis and complex problem-solving. Picture books frequently employ words and images to tell a story, requiring children to actively bridge the gaps and make inferences to understand the complete narrative (Pike et al., 2010). For instance, an author may use minimal text but rich, suggestive illustrations, prompting a child to analyze the characters' facial expressions or the setting's mood to deduce what is happening or how a character feels. This practice in interpretation, which often involves skills like analysis and interpretation, encourages children to look beyond surface-level information and consider implicit meanings (Rindengan, 2023). When children are encouraged to ask “why” and “how” questions, they learn to establish cause-and-effect relationships, which is foundational to logical reasoning (Gunawan et al., 2023).

Furthermore, picture books expose young readers to diverse characters, scenarios, and conflicts, crucial for developing empathy and considering multiple viewpoints a core critical thinking component (Deliman, 2021). Children practice shifting their perspective by engaging with a character's choices, motivations, and the consequences of their actions. When prompted with open-ended questions like, “Why do you think the character did that?” or “How would you have acted in that situation?” young readers learn to evaluate evidence from the text and images to support their interpretations, moving beyond simple recall (Law, 2020). This exploration of complex issues in an approachable, narrative form equips students to navigate later and critique complex real-world situations, such as the social and systemic factors underlying bullying (Vasquez, 2010).

This study argues that reading picture books offers a uniquely powerful and accessible pathway to building these essential skills of critical thinking and resilience. Picture books serve as a safe and familiar medium through which children can explore complex emotional landscapes and social dynamics. Within the corpus examined, picture books are broadly represented by stories featuring human characters and animal characters. Previous research suggests that each provides a different reading experience. Kid readers can relate to stories with human characters more easily than those with animal characters because, when the characters are human, readers can identify themselves as the participants. In contrast, when the characters are animals, readers position themselves as the observers (Zohrabi et al., 2019). This distinction provides a beneficial consideration for educators and parents when selecting picture books for particular learning purposes.

Several studies offer evidence of the importance of reading picture books for early learners. First, the illustrations aid children in developing critical visual literacy skills, as outlined by the New Zealand curriculum (Gibbons, 1999). The aesthetic images sustain readers' engagement and foster a more profound understanding. Second,

educators have used picture books in early childhood education because they foster communication, creativity, and critical thinking (Bunting, 2013). Picture books serve as powerful tools for encouraging children to engage in discussions about illustrations and narratives. The images initiate conversations about personal interpretations, allowing individuals to articulate their thoughts and feelings. Third, a review of 80 award-winning Thai and American picture books showed that the pragmatic strategies and the conversational utterances encourage readers' imagination and build their ability to interpret messages (Sotthiyothin, 2020). Fourth, picture books have been used in STEAM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) because the features of verbal and visual text serve not only to provide knowledge but also to inspire students to "create, experiment, problem-solve, and construct" (Hovanec, 2023, p. 1). Fifth, primary schools have used picture books because they offer complete textual structures, the stories imply cultural insights, and encourage imagination and problem-solving skills (Liu, 2025). In particular, teachers use the picture tour method to stimulate interest, predict story developments, connect content to personal experiences, and encourage students to reflect and share insights. Collectively, these studies denote that picture books support not only children's engagement with stories but also the development of visual literacy, interpretation, communication, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Picture books present various stories, whether with human characters or animal characters, that can inculcate social-emotional literacy; through the protagonists' experience, kid readers learn to embrace diversity, to accept someone's opinions, to understand others' feelings, to enjoy togetherness, and to make up after a conflict (Tisnawijaya & Kurniati, 2024). Picture books instill character-building qualities such as compassion, honesty, hard work, and other positive attitudes, and they encourage resilience and how to cope and fight back. Resilience is "the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands" (APA, 2025b, para. 1). Resilience is crucial for children to cope with adverse circumstances, and learning to be resilient can be done through reading children's literature (Parsons, 2006). With the wide range of themes in picture books, kids are exposed to various emotions and learn to be empathetic, helping them avoid negative behaviors such as bullying.

Literature presents many aspects of bullying, including class, race, and gender, from various perspectives: bully, victim, and bystander. Literature allows readers to develop empathy and learn how to deal with bullying (Williams, 2020). Children's literature plays a critical role in helping young readers develop a sense of hope and resilience. The way the protagonist overcomes challenges and perseveres serves as a model for problem-solving, demonstrating strategies to cope and achieve positive outcomes from difficult situations (Arnold & Sableski, 2023). Educators shall utilize selections of books that address homelessness, divorce, natural disasters, loss, or other traumatic events. These books can relate to students who face similar situations or even those who have not, as the stories foster hope, kindness, and emotional support. Such stories can initiate discussions about sensitive topics and encourage students' personal responses, thus developing social-emotional literacy.

Previous studies highlight the significant ways in which picture books might foster empathy, tolerance, and self-confidence. In recent studies, the educational and psychological benefits of using picture books to foster young readers' emotional intelligence are becoming more widely acknowledged. However, there is currently

insufficient comprehensive research on how picture books use narrative and illustrative elements to portray resilience and its coping strategies. The multimodal nature of picture books, integrating narrative and illustrative elements to build meaning, serves as a potential tool for improving literacy, character education, and cognitive development. Within the context of global youth mental health crises, especially those linked to bullying, picture books play an important role in both social and school contexts.

Method

This study utilizes a qualitative literary analysis approach focusing on narrative and illustrative elements that depict resilience in selected American and Indonesian picture books: the Tyrone series by Wilhelm (1988, 1991, 1993, 1995) and *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* volume 2 (2016). The Indonesian series' excerpts are translated into English by the researcher. The data are obtained by extracting narrative and illustrative elements, including character dialogues, thoughts, and feelings that convey coping strategies due to bullying. The analysis integrates narrative analysis, language acquisition, and emotional and cognitive development to explore how resilience is represented for young readers. By identifying picture books as a multimodal entity that thematically aligns with resilience and anti-bullying narratives, this research provides a comprehensive discussion on strengthening resilience among young readers, such as being courageous, regulating emotions, seeking help, and standing up for oneself or others.

Moreover, this study employs a qualitative comparative literary analysis using Most Different Systems Design (MDSD) as the comparative framework. Here, this comparative framework compares cases that differ substantially across historical, cultural, linguistic, and educational contexts but exhibit a similar outcome – represented by the two groups of picture books, rather than as the national systems (Lijphart, 1971; Przeworski & Teune, 1970).

Table 1. Case Selection Rationale based on Most Different Systems Design

Variable	<i>Tyrone</i> series	<i>Aku Anak yang Berani</i> series
Country	United States	Indonesia
Historical context	Late 1980s – 1990s	2010s – 2020s
Culture	Predominantly individualistic	Predominantly collectivist
Educational paradigm	Character education	Social-emotional learning & child protection
Language	English	Indonesian
Publishing context	American children's publishing	Indonesian educational publishing

The selected texts represent two markedly different systems. Despite these substantial differences, both series portray bullying and promote resilience to young readers. Applying MDSD enables this study to investigate how different historical and cultural contexts generate comparable educational functions while revealing variations in the representation of resilience, coping strategy, and anti-bullying pedagogy. The comparison is intended to reveal convergences and divergences in the educational and

literary functions of the picture books, rather than to establish a causal relationship between particular historical and cultural contexts and their representations.

Results

Hans Wilhelm's Tyrone Series as Potential Literary Pathways to Teach Children Resilience

Hans Wilhelm's *Tyrone the Horrible* (1988), *Tyrone the Double Dirty Rotten Cheater* (1991), *Tyrone the Big Bad Bully* (1993), and *Tyrone and the Swamp Gang* (1995) are picture books with young dinosaurs as the characters. The main characters are Tyrone, a tyrannosaurus, and Boland, an allosaurus. The plots of the four books revolve around the two with their young dinosaur friends on the playground or at school. Although the titles of the books utilize Tyrone as the title, each book starts with Boland; the narration begins with how he is scared of Tyrone, the bully in the neighborhood. The books portray bullying issues, with Boland as the victim and Tyrone as the bully. Each book depicts negative behavior: picking on the smallest in *Tyrone the Horrible* (1988); cheating to win every game in *Tyrone the Double Dirty Rotten Cheater* (1991); misbehaving in *Tyrone the Big Bad Bully* (1993); and ganging up in *Tyrone and the Swamp Gang* (1995). As mentioned in the previous chapters, picture books have several virtues, such as promoting literacy, elevating moral values, and establishing social-emotional awareness. Here, in *Tyrone the Horrible* series, the discussion covers: bullying actions, the effects on the victim and the correlation of nurture to an individual's characteristics.

Table 2. Bullying and Resilience in *Tyrone the Horrible*, *Tyrone the Double Dirty Rotten Cheater*, *Tyrone the Big Bad Bully*, and *Tyrone and the Swamp Gang*

Category	Specific Forms of Bullying Identified	Forms of Resilience & Critical Thinking
Verbal & Psychological	Verbal intimidation, insults, mocking weaker characters, psychological dominance through fear and humiliation, manipulative cheating behavior	Emotional regulation: victims choosing not to retaliate immediately. Peer accountability: friends or surrounding characters confronting Tyrone's behavior
Physical & Coercive	Picking on the smallest, direct intimidation, coercive bullying, aggressive physical misbehavior, ganging up as collective intimidation	Strategic help-seeking: seeking adult or authority intervention. Collective Intervention: peers uniting against Tyrone's actions for protection
Social & Systemic	Exclusion through group bullying, formation of a gang against others, reinforcement of dominance hierarchies between stronger and weaker characters	Cognitive reframing: recognizing bullying as unacceptable social conduct. Empathetic Leadership: inclusion and solidarity among victims or peers

The table categorizes the manifestations of bullying in Tyrone series into verbal and psychological, physical and coercive, and social and systemic forms, while also identifying corresponding modes of resilience and critical thinking demonstrated by the victims and surrounding characters.

Bullying actions were done by Tyrone towards Boland in several ways. First, in *Tyrone the Horrible* (1988), Tyrone likes to pick on Boland. "He punched and teased him and always stole his snack or sandwich" (Wilhelm, 1988, p. 6). Tyrone takes advantage of his gigantic body to physically attack Boland. Second, in *Tyrone the Double Dirty Rotten Cheater* (1991), Tyrone cheats on every game, "Tyrone didn't seem to care what

anyone thought. He played by his very own rules. ... 'Ha ha!' Tyrone said to himself. 'Cheating is easy – as long as nobody finds out.'" (Wilhelm, 1991, pp. 5–6). Tyrone exploits his strength in tug of war, his height in card game he looks at others' cards; he trips Boland in egg race, and he rips the sack at the bottom in sack race. Tyrone has won every game since no one has been able to prove him cheating. Third, in *Tyrone the Big Bad Bully* (1993), Tyrone bothers Boland in any way possible. "On Monday Tyrone surprised him with a water bomb. On Tuesday Tyrone tripped him. On Wednesday Tyrone called him dirty names. On Thursday Tyrone stole Boland's lunch. And on Friday Tyrone used Boland as a basketball!" (Wilhelm, 1993, pp. 4–5).

Tyrone does verbal and physical attacks on Boland for fun. He does not care about Boland's feelings or his well-being. Moreover, Tyrone also misbehaves at home. His uncle grounds him for being naughty. "My uncle is going to be pretty mad when he finds out that I threw his false teeth into the swamp. ... After I nailed his favorite slippers to the floor. And ... that I dumped all the garbage in his bed" (Wilhelm, 1993, p. 26). Being mischievous is Tyrone's trait. He does not think about how his rascality will get back to him. Fourth, in *Tyrone and the Swamp Gang* (1995), Tyrone asks his friends to ruin properties. "One of the things Tyrone and his Swampies did for fun was to play practical jokes. That night, for instance, they poured tons of soap powder into the public fountain" (Wilhelm, 1995, p. 6). Tyrone and his friends like to bother others. It can be concluded that bullying actions done by Tyrone include verbal and physical attack by exploiting his strength; he is the biggest and the strongest, which makes him feel superior, especially towards Boland, the smallest of all dinosaurs around him. He likes to exercise his power by terrorizing Boland.

The effect of bullying can be seen through Boland's experience, especially in *Tyrone the Horrible* (1988). Boland feels anxious to get through the next day. "Night after night, Boland had a hard time getting to sleep. He kept thinking of ways to avoid Tyrone. It seemed hopeless" (Wilhelm, 1988, p. 8). He asks for his friends' advice, but nothing works. Terry suggests that he be nice. "You have to give him a present and show him you care" (Wilhelm, 1988, p. 9). He tries to befriend Tyrone by giving him his ice cream, but "Tyrone grabbed the cone. Then he turned it upside down and squashed it on Boland's head" (Wilhelm, 1988, p. 10). Next, Boland tries to ignore Tyrone when he is around, according to Stella's insight, "Don't pay any attention to that big bully when he tries to tease you. Just stay cool" (Wilhelm, 1988, p. 11). However, "[Tyrone] stomped on Boland's tail" (Wilhelm, 1988, p. 14). Next, Stego suggests fighting Tyrone, "It's time to fight back!" (Wilhelm, 1988, p. 15). It turns out Boland suffers injuries all over his body as he loses the fight.

Boland's experience illustrates how bullying happens in children's world. The victim suffers without protection; Boland's friends care for him in ways they try to come up with solutions in dealing with Tyrone, but they let Boland deal with him alone. Even when they see themselves, Tyrone hurts Boland, they do not stand up for him; Terry, Stella, and Stego are bystanders who are too afraid to fight together. This passive action implies they are also intimidated by Tyrone and worry for their own safety. The story, then, shows how children do not tell their hardships to the adults; they try to deal with the problems themselves. Furthermore, the narrative portrays a world that is focused on children and in which adult authority is either unreachable or distant. There are two interpretations to view this. On the one hand, it emphasizes autonomy and reflects children's propensity to solve issues on their own. On the other hand, it suggests a lack of trust or perceived parental support.

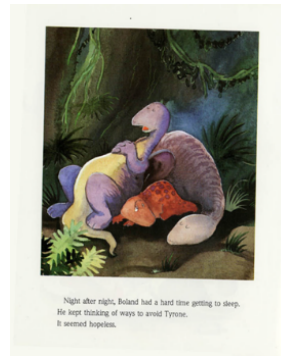


Figure 1

Anxiety as a Result of Bullying

Note. Boland is curling up between his parents. From *Tyrone the Horrible* (p. 8), by Hans Wilhelm, 1988, Scholastic Inc.

The picture shows three characters lying down. Boland, the smallest, is between his parents. While his parents are fast asleep, Boland is still awake, thinking about how to avoid Tyrone the next day. The black dominant color as the background refers to the setting of time, at night, and Boland's anxiousness towards Tyrone's devilry. Even though he is literally close to his parents, he does not share his troubles. Since Boland does not open up to his parents, they do not know what happens to Boland.

It turns out that Tyrone's bully characteristics have a correlation to nurture, how he is raised, especially depicted in *Tyrone the Big Bad Bully* (1993). Tyrone's harassing others may have to do with the violence he gets at home. His uncle abuses him to deal with his misbehavior.



Figure 2

A Bullying Personality Results from an Abusive Upbringing

Note. Tyrone's uncle is mad and tries to hit Tyrone. From *Tyrone the Big Bad Bully* (pp. 22-23), by Hans Wilhelm, 1993, Scholastic Inc.

The picture utilizes the contrast of dark and bright colors (Figure 2). The black background on the left side implies the uncle's anger and his violent act, the black shadow below Tyrone implies his fear of the uncle's attack, while the shadow behind Boland implies his surprise at the situation. The yellowish bright color on the right side portrays the source of light from the front window and the position of the door to suggest freedom; the sooner they leave, the sooner they are safe. Tyrone's uncle is the biggest of all, depicting his strength; even Tyrone, who is the biggest among the dinosaur kids, looks small. Tyrone and his uncle share similar physical characteristics; both of them are tyrannosaurus. Their gestures show power relations; the uncle's open mouth shows his sharp fangs, which signify his anger, and his sharp claws in his hands signify the strength as he grabs Tyrone.

As far as moral values are concerned, *Tyrone the Horrible* series proposes the idea of moral reciprocity, emphasizing that if we do bad, then we will reap bad deeds. Repeated misconduct such as cheating, bullying, and group aggression further reinforces

this moral pattern throughout the series. This idea shows in each book: Tyrone eats a very spicy sandwich that he steals from Boland in *Tyrone the Horrible* (1988), Tyrone is stung by bees in *Tyrone the Double Dirty Rotten Cheater* (1991), Tyrone is punished by his uncle in *Tyrone the Big Bad Bully* (1993), and Tyrone crashes on lava rocks in *Tyrone and the Swamp Gang* (1995). By consistently portraying Tyrone's negative behavior as leading to unpleasant consequences, the narratives encourage young readers to recognize the relationship between actions and outcomes. This recurring cause-and-effect structure promotes moral learning by illustrating that harmful actions ultimately result in consequences for the perpetrator.

In terms of narratology, the book series uses the titles as preludes to the unexpected characteristics: *Tyrone the Horrible* (1988), *Tyrone the Double Dirty Rotten Cheater* (1991), *Tyrone the Big Bad Bully* (1993), *Tyrone and the Swamp Gang* (1995). All the series mentions Tyrone as the title, yet introduces Boland first in the stories, representing the experiences of kid readers that ordinary, peaceful life can still be disturbed. By doing so, the kid readers are led to follow Boland's point of view as the victim of bullying. For example, in the exposition of *Tyrone the Horrible* (1988) is about Boland's characteristics, "Boland was a little dinosaur. He lived with his mother and father in a great swamp forest" (Wilhelm, 1988, p. 1) marks a swift focus on what the title of the book, *Tyrone the Horrible*, and the introduction of the main character. Readers generally assume that the names mentioned in the titles are the main characters, which is usually proven in the introduction. Next, the character mentioned in the book's title, Tyrone, is mentioned, specifically about his personality.

His name was Tyrone—or Tyrone the Horrible, as he was usually called. He was just a kid himself, but he was much bigger and stronger than most of the others. He was a real bully if you ever saw one. In fact, he was the world's first big bully! (Wilhelm, 1988, pp. 4–5)

The verbal text shows direct characterizations and explicitly says that Tyrone is a bully. The name-calling, horrible, given by others means that Tyrone has an evil personality. He uses his strength to dominate others, so everyone fears him. The visual text enhances this characteristic.



Figure 3

A Menacing Face Indicates a Negative Personality

Note. Tyrone in the middle of the forest. From *Tyrone the Horrible* (pp. 4–5), by Hans Wilhelm, 1988, Scholastic Inc.

The wide-open red eyes and sharp fangs signal Tyrone's evil personality (Figure 3). Moreover, dark brown dominates the background, giving a scary ambiance. The author purposely utilizes the characteristics of real dinosaurs, a Tyrannosaurus-Tyrone, and an Allosaurus-Boland, as two opposite characters; an allosaurus is an herbivore that does not attack other animals, while a tyrannosaurus is a carnivore that preys on

smaller animals. The characters' contrasting appearances, behaviors, and narrative roles construct Tyrone and Boland as fictional opposites, with Tyrone positioned as the threatening bully and Boland as the victim of bullying.

The introduction of the two characters is consistent in the rest of the series: *Tyrone the Double Dirty Rotten Cheater* (1991), *Tyrone the Big Bad Bully* (1993), and *Tyrone and the Swamp Gang* (1995). In *Tyrone the Double Dirty Rotten Cheater* (1991), Boland was a little dinosaur.

He and his friends were going to Swamp Island for a week. They would eat, play games, and sleep out under the stars. Everybody was very excited. Everybody that is, except Boland. His worst enemy, Tyrone, was coming along too! Tyrone the Horrible, as he usually called, was known to make trouble. Lots of trouble. (Wilhelm, 1991, p. 1)

The verbal text and exposition allude to the relationship between Boland and Tyrone, the victim and the bully. This introduction, just like the first series, mentions Boland as the first rather than the character mentioned in the book's title.



Figure 4

Power Relations between Big and Small

Note. Tyrone steps on Boland's steps on their way to the Swamp Island. From *Tyrone the Double Dirty Rotten Cheater* (p. 1), by Hans Wilhelm, 1991, Scholastic Inc.

The visual text uses a white background to show the setting of morning time and the contrast of colors between Tyrone and the rest of the characters; from all the characters, only Tyrone has a darkish color to imply his evil character (Figure 4). The same features also appear in the next series, *Tyrone the Big Bad Bully* (1993),

That was Tyrone! Tyrone the Horrible, as he was called. Tyrone was a kid himself, but he was much bigger and stronger than anyone else. And he liked to pick on Boland. (Wilhelm, 1993, pp. 1–3)

This narration explicitly characterizes the small and big opposition between Boland and Tyrone. The size matters as it gives Tyrone the capability to hurt Boland easily.

In the *Tyrone and the Swamp Gang* (1995), the introduction of the two characters still employs the same style, "The leader was Boland's worst enemy, who was none other than TYRONE! Or Tyrone the Horrible, as he liked to be called. Tyrone was the world's first bully, and Boland was his favorite victim." (Wilhelm, 1995, pp. 2–3). This narration composes the relationship between Boland and Tyrone. As in the previous three series, this book describes Boland's condition first and then mentions Tyrone as the cause of his misery.

Hans Wilhelm's *Tyrone the Horrible* series presents a consistent narrative framework that allows young readers to explore the dynamics of bullying safely. The characters function as clear archetypes: Tyrone represents the persistent aggressor, while Boland embodies the sympathetic victim. This narrative consistency enables children to identify with the characters vicariously, whether they see themselves in Boland's vulnerability, recognize their own aggressive impulses in Tyrone, or reflect on their roles as bystanders. Initially, the text depicts the severe psychological toll bullying takes on a victim. Boland is not merely annoyed; he exhibits signs of genuine distress, including insomnia, anxiety, and a constant preoccupation with avoiding his tormentor. However, the narrative arc moves beyond victimization to showcase Boland's wit and agency. Although he is physically smaller and fearful, Boland attempts various strategies to resolve the conflict, ranging from diplomatic efforts to befriend Tyrone to seeking advice on confrontation.

The turning point in *Tyrone the Horrible* (1988) illustrates that resilience often requires critical thinking and strategic action. After realizing that his attempts at friendship are futile against Tyrone's aggression, Boland devises a plan that uses the bully's own behavior against him. Knowing Tyrone will inevitably steal his lunch, Boland prepares a "bait"—a sandwich loaded with hot peppers. The resulting scene marks a shift in power dynamics:

"AAaaaaaarghhhhh! It was Tyrone. Huge flames were coming out of his mouth. HELP, I'm burning, he cried. I'm dying! I'm poisoned! HELP, HEEEEEEELP!"

"Nonsense!" Boland said with a laugh. "It was only a sandwich. I didn't know you were so sensitive. I happen to like double-thick-red-hot-pepper-sandwiches. Too bad you don't." He turned around and went off, leaving the moaning and groaning Tyrone behind. (Wilhelm, 1988, pp. 24–25)

This moment is crucial for the analysis of resilience. Boland does not engage in a physical fight he cannot win; instead, he sets a boundary using his intellect. By allowing Tyrone to face the direct consequences of his own greed, Boland successfully stands up for himself. This act implies that resilience is not just about enduring pain, but about finding creative, autonomous solutions to stop the cycle of abuse.



Figure 5

Resilience Signifies the Courage to Stand Up Against Bullying

Note. Boland tricks Tyrone into eating a very spicy sandwich. From *Tyrone the Horrible* (p. 8), by Hans Wilhelm, 1988, Scholastic Inc.

This event uses a two-page layout to emphasize several things. First, this layout portrays Tyrone and Boland's vast difference in body size. The body size signifies that it is easy for Tyrone to physically hurt Boland, as his gigantic body gives him enormous strength. Second, both characters are put on separate pages: half of Tyrone's body on the left, his mouth wide open, and Boland on the right, smiling. These positions imply they are in two opposing conditions: Tyrone is in agony, while Boland is in triumph. Third, the color of fire spouted from Tyrone's mouth is similar to Boland's skin, which implies that even though Boland is so much smaller than Tyrone, the size does not have

anything to do with the brain; he can take out Tyrone's evilness. With this event as the finale of *Tyrone the Horrible* (1988), the book shows a way to confront a bully is through revenge. Moreover, the story does not set Boland to ask for the adult dinosaurs' help; instead, he takes the matter into his own hands, which in real life may not be done and may not end as smoothly as in the book.

Ideo and Ideo's *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* Series as Potential Literary Pathways to Teach Children Resilience

The aforementioned pedagogical function is further highlighted when examined alongside Indonesia children's literature, notably the five-volume *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* (*I Am Brave, I Can Protect Myself*) series (2014–2019) which explicitly promotes courage, self-protection, and resilience among young readers. While resilience in the Tyrone series emerges implicitly through characters' experiences of conflict and its moral consequences, the Indonesian series presents resilience as an explicit educational objective, reinforced through direct instruction and self-protective behaviors. Collectively, these two series reveal the capacity of children's literature across cultures in fostering empathy, moral reasoning, and adaptive coping skills that support children's social-emotional well-being.

A prime example of Indonesian children's literature designed to promote resilience is the five-part series, *I am Brave, I Can Protect Myself*, published from 2014 to 2019. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) utilizes these books as a guide for children navigating the complexities of bullying. The following discussion centers on Volume 2 by Watiek Ideo and Theo Ideo (2016). After introducing the fundamental concepts of bullying, the book presents ten short stories: *Do not Take My Money*, *Whose Game Is It?*, *The Master Copycat*, *Who Did It First?*, *Do not Get Too Close*, *The Neighborhood Bully*, *The Poor Cat*, *Why Be Ashamed?*, *Curly*, and *Because of Being Late*. By utilizing child characters in familiar settings, the stories capture the realistic struggles many Indonesian children face. Each story follows the same plot: the protagonist faces bullying, receives support from others, and demonstrates resilience in the face of it. To ensure the message is clear, each story is immediately followed by an educational section that deconstructs the specific bullying behavior used as the plot's conflict, turning the narrative into a practical learning moment.

Table 3. Bullying and Resilience in *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri*

Category	Specific Forms of Bullying Identified	Forms of Resilience & Critical Thinking
Verbal & Psychological	Body shaming, familial insults, aggressive modeling, verbal abuse	Emotional Regulation: Strategic non-engagement (ignoring). Peer Accountability: Friends correcting toxic behavior
Physical & Coercive	Financial extortion, physical threats, domestic abuse, animal cruelty	Strategic Help-Seeking: Mobilizing adult protection. Collective Intervention: Safety in numbers/united front
Social & Systemic	Gender-based exclusion, socioeconomic stigma, class prejudice	Cognitive Reframing: Deconstructing stereotypes. Empathetic Leadership: Bridging social divides (Inclusion)

The books reveal several forms of bullying in different aspects of a child's life. First, bullying through verbal and psychological aggression takes the form of body shaming, *Curly*; familial disparagement, *Who Did It First?* and aggressive modeling within sibling dynamics, *The Master Copycat*. These types of bullying, the use of verbal

attacks, are often used to dismantle the victim's self-esteem to build hierarchy between the bully and the victim. Second, bullying through physical and coercive intimidation takes the form of aggression in financial extortion, *Do not Take My Money*; territorial dominance, *The Neighborhood Bully*; animal cruelty, *The Poor Cat*; and domestic abuse, *Because of Being Late*. Here, physical threats can originate from peers and even trusted authority figures. Third, bullying through social exclusion takes the form of gender-based policing, *Whose Game Is It?*; socioeconomic shaming, *Why Be Ashamed?*; and class-based ostracism, *Do not Get Too Close*. These types of bullying use societal norms to alienate victims based on their identity, appearance, or financial status.

The protagonist in each story performs resilience or strategic responses in two categories. First, resilience through cognitive and emotional self-regulation takes the form of deconstructing stereotypes, *Whose Game Is It?* and *Why Be Ashamed?*; and practicing emotional regulation to ignore body shaming, *Curly*. These resilience strategies involve critical thinking that allows victims to disarm the bully mentally before any external action is taken. Second, resilience through collective efficacy and help-seeking takes the forms of bystander intervention and collective counter-attacks, *Do not Take My Money* and *The Poor Cat*; authoritative advocacy or adults' protection, *The Neighborhood Bully* and *Because of Being Late*. These strategies show wisdom in acknowledging self-limitations and in utilizing a support system to address bullying.

In the first story, *Do not Take My Money*, Zaki is cornered by Joni, an older student who tries to intimidate him into giving up his money. "However, Zaki's cheerfulness gradually faded. One day, when the street was quiet... 'Where's your money?! Come on, hand it over! You'd better, or else!'" (Ideo & Ideo, 2016, p. 12)



Figure 6

Power Imbalance between a Senior and a Junior Student

Note. Zaki is stopped by Joni who mugs him. From *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* (p. 17), by Watiek Ideo and Theo Ideo, 2016, Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

The visual (Figure 6) shows that bullying is relational; it is a power play between the senior and the junior at school; Joni preys on Zaki as he is a newcomer and a younger kid. Zaki's face shows a terrified expression, while Joni's body language shows confidence because no one else can prevent his action. As he is bigger than Zaki, he feels powerful. This event depicts financial extortion and physical intimidation, leveraging the classic power imbalance between a senior and a junior student. The aggressor uses his age and size to instill fear, intending to coerce the victim into surrendering his property. It highlights how bullies often rely on the victim's isolation to succeed. While Zaki is terrified about his situation, his friends are supportive; they notice the situation and encourage him to stand up for himself.

"We've all been through that. You have to say no or just avoid him when you see him," said Ferdi. 'But he threatened me when I refused,' said Zaki hopelessly.

Feeling sorry for him, Zaki's friends finally gathered to come up with a plan to help him" (Ideo & Ideo, 2016, p. 17).

The passage implies that a bully tends to have more than one victim; Zaki's friends immediately recognize his changing attitude because of bullying, having experienced it themselves. Second, bullying is continued through fear; once the victims are no longer in fear, the bully finds others who can be threatened. Zaki's friends manage to get free from Joni's power play, and they build Zaki's confidence to fight back. Instead of facing the threat alone, Zaki is supported by his classmates, who intervene to stop the harassment.



Figure 7

Resilience through Collective Counterattack

Note. Zaki's friends come forward to protect him from Joni, the bully who tries to mug him. From *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* (p. 19), by Watiek Ideo and Theo Ideo, 2016, Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

The story resolves with the group successfully neutralizing the threat through their united front. The visual (Figure 7) shows that although Joni is the biggest of all, he loses his power as soon as all four Zaki's friends corner him so as not to get closer to Zaki.

"Why are you looking for Zaki?"

"You're after his money again, aren't you?"

"Leave Zaki alone!"

"Yeah, stop taking his money all the time". (Ideo & Ideo, 2016, p. 19)

This event signifies several things. First, knowing that someone has the same problem we had induces compassion. Second, resilience can be formed through solidarity. Third, bullying can be stopped when the victim no longer fears the bully, thereby allowing the bully to lose his power. Resilience in *Do not Take My Money* is portrayed through collective intervention, in which bystanders actively choose to become defenders rather than remain passive. The characters demonstrate that resilience is not just individual toughness, but the ability to utilize a social support system. By banding together, the group disrupts the power dynamic and ensures safety in numbers.

The second story, *Whose Game Is It?*, Dio faces ridicule and social exclusion from his male peers because he enjoys playing Jacks, a game they perceive as exclusively for girls. "In the middle of the fun, a sudden commotion broke out. 'Oi! Why is a boy playing jacks?! Hahaha!' 'Yeah, just like a girl! Hahaha!' 'You should be wearing a skirt! Hahaha!'" (Ideo & Ideo, 2016, p. 25). The aggressors attempt to enforce rigid gender roles by shaming the protagonist for engaging in an activity coded as feminine. It highlights how peer pressure is used to police behavior and suppress individual expression. The

passage implies that one mockery leads to others. This event shows that bullies tend to work in groups; when a bully is in action, others observe that it is unfortunate to become a victim and that it is easier to follow the bully than to stop it and become the next victim.



Figure 8

Gender-based Bullying

Note. Zaki's friends mock Dio for playing knucklebones with girls. From *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* (p. 25), by Watiek Ideo and Theo Ideo, 2016, Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

The visual shows the stratification: literally from Dio, who is underground playing Jacks, and his three friends up above walking on stilts; Dio is inferior while his friends are superior. This power play is more intense because more than one perpetrator is involved in the bullying. Dio feels upset and then stops playing. The girls tell what happened to Yuda, and a concerned adult explains that there is no specific game that is girl-only or boy-only, just as there is no specific job that is female-only or male-only.

“It’s the same with games. Everyone can play whatever they want because there are no rules saying girls only have to play jacks, dolls, and things like that. And vice versa.’ ‘See? Hear that? You’re just a nuisance,’ Rani snapped, still annoyed” (Ideo & Ideo, 2016, p. 34).

The conflict is interrupted by an adult figure who steps in to mediate and challenge the boys’ rigid views on gender-specific activities. The story concludes with an educational moment that normalizes all forms of play for every child, regardless of gender.



Figure 9

Resilience involves Accepting Guidance

Note. The children play together. From *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* (p. 19), by Watiek Ideo and Theo Ideo, 2016, Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

The visual (Figure 9) shows all children in the neighborhood playing in harmony; they play in groups with different games, all without gender boundaries. Their smiling faces indicate that they are happy to play without the boundaries that limit games to girls or boys only. The passage shows that bullying in children's context can be caused by misperception about gender; it is the adults' duty to educate children whenever gender stereotyping occurs.

Resilience in *Whose Game Is It?* is depicted through authoritative advocacy and the cognitive reframing of harmful stereotypes. The intervention of a trusted adult validates the victim's identity and choices, providing a necessary counter-narrative to the bullies' narrow worldview. This story teaches that resilience involves rejecting arbitrary social limitations and accepting guidance to deconstruct prejudice.

In the tenth story, *Because of Being Late*, Iwan stays out past his curfew, triggering a violent outburst from his father. "Did you even hear what I just said?" Unexpectedly, his father lost his temper. A blow landed on Iwan" (Ideo & Ideo, 2016, p. 136).

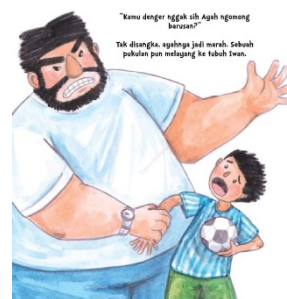


Figure 10
Physical Abuse

Note. The physical abuse occurs. From *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* (p. 136), by Watiek Ideo and Theo Ideo, 2016, Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

When a kid fails to comply with house rules, parents can be mad and give abusive punishment. The narrative depicts domestic physical abuse and punitive aggression, where a parent uses violence under the guise of discipline. The father exploits his authority to inflict harm, reacting disproportionately to a common childhood error like lateness. The visual text shows the characters' body sizes and facial expressions, the father, who is bigger and angrier, and the son, who is much smaller and in fear (Figure 10). This conflict illustrates a severe breach of trust, transforming the home from a sanctuary into a place of fear.

Iwan finds refuge with a neighbor, Fikri, who helps him acknowledge his own mistake regarding the time while simultaneously confronting the father about his abusive reaction.

"Not wanting to endure another beating, Iwan fled to Fikri's house. He told him everything. 'You were wrong to break the curfew you agreed on. But what your father did was wrong, too—that counts as child abuse,' Fikri explained. Iwan stayed there for a few days. 'Aren't you going home? What about school?' Fikri asked. Iwan just shook his head." (Ideo & Ideo, 2016, p. 138)

The passage shows that abusive treatment at home can be a traumatic experience that causes more impacts. If he is not helped, this will be the reason to drop out of

school. Fikri, in this case, is an adult who gives solace and navigates Iwan to correct his negative behavior.



Figure 11

Resilience through External Resource Mobilization

Note. The children play together happily. From *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* (p. 138), by Watiek Ideo and Theo Ideo, 2016, Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

The visual shows how Iwan tells Fikri about his abusive father (Figure 11). As Iwan runs away and seeks protection from big brother in the neighborhood, it can be seen as a resilience act; he does not want to be hurt by his father.

Resilience in *Because of Being Late* is manifested through active self-preservation and the mobilization of external resources. Iwan correctly identifies the danger and seeks a "safe harbor" in a trusted adult, refusing to endure the abuse in silence. This intervention highlights that resilience involves knowing when to escape a toxic environment and secure a guardian who can enforce accountability.

Discussion

The Tyrone series offers valuable pedagogical and social-emotional lessons for young readers particularly concerning bullying and the development of resilience. The series consistently depicts intimidation, ridicule, cheating, and collective aggression emphasizing the multifaceted nature of bullying and its detrimental effects on victims' emotional well-being and social development. Concurrently, the stories frame resilience as a vital means of responding to adversity, reflected in characters' ability to manage their emotions, seek assistance, build supportive peer-based solidarity, and critically recognize detrimental social conducts. For young readers, the series provides a reflective framework that enables them to identify, understand, and critically assess bullying within familiar social contexts. In this regard, the Tyrone series contributes meaningfully to children's development by fostering resilience, encouraging ethical reflection, and enhancing a critical understanding of social dynamics.

The *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* series frames resilience as a set of teachable cognitive, emotional, and social abilities that help children deal with various types of bullying rather than as an intrinsic personal quality. Through its portrayal of verbal, physical, and systemic hostility, the books acknowledge the complexity of bullying in children's everyday lives while simultaneously providing practical and helpful coping strategies. The characters' resilience is continuously fostered through critical thinking, emotional self-regulation, and help-seeking behaviors demonstrating that overcoming bullying frequently necessitates both individual agency and supportive social networks. The integration of explanatory sections following each story transforms the text from a collection of narratives into an explicit pedagogical tool that equips young readers with the knowledge to identify abusive behaviors and respond appropriately. As a result, the series reinforces the wider educational role of

children's literature in fostering social-emotional well-being by helping kids build resilience, empathy, and social responsibility in addition to raising awareness of bullying. In this respect, the series provides potential spaces for reflection on whether protection is framed as an individual responsibility, a shared responsibility among peers and adults, or a combination of both.

The two series illustrate the evolution of children's literature from a moralistic paradigm of resilience to a socio-emotional and empowerment-based paradigm. Rather, it reveals differences within particular corpus examined. While *Tyrone the Horrible* teaches resilience as lessons of personal morality and the consequences of transgression, *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri* sees resilience as a dynamic set of cognitive, emotional, and social qualities that can be taught and developed. These findings contribute to an understanding of how resilience can be represented as a complex process rather than as a uniformly positive or successful response to adversity. Moreover, the explanatory sections of following each story transforms the narratives into practical guides for building resilience. Taken together, the findings suggest that resilience emerges through critical thinking, emotional regulation, help-seeking behavior, and the courage to challenge unfair treatment. These qualities enable children not only to cope with bullying but also to develop their empathy, ethical awareness, and confidence.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that picture books effectively serve as powerful literary tool for demonstrating resilience, critical thinking, and social-emotional development in young readers. Through a comparative analysis of Hans Wilhelm's Tyrone series and Watiek Ideo and Theo Ideo's *Aku Anak yang Berani, Bisa Melindungi Diri Sendiri*, the researcher reveals that children's literature provides meaningful representations of bullying, its psychological consequences, and the strategies children can employ to respond to adversity. Although the two series originate from different cultural contexts and employ distinct pedagogical approaches, both emphasize resilience as an essential resource for navigating challenging social situations.

In light of the growing concerns surrounding bullying, mental health issues, and including youth suicide, picture books should be recognized as valuable educational resources that support preventive efforts in homes, schools, and communities. Parents, teachers, and other caregivers can utilize carefully selected picture books to facilitate discussions about bullying and resilience. By engaging children with stories that model constructive responses to adversity, picture books can contribute to the development of healthier, safer, and more compassionate environments for young readers. Ultimately, this study accentuates the significant role of children's literature in nurturing resilient individuals who are better equipped to confront social challenges and maintain psychological well-being throughout their lives. However, this study is limited by its focus on only two picture book series and its reliance on textual analysis, which does not examine how children actually interpret and respond to these representations of bullying and resilience. Thus, a broader range of children's literature from diverse and detailed cultural contexts could shed light on the impacts on children's perceptions, emotional development, and coping strategies. Further research should therefore complement textual analysis with emparical reader-response studies involving children, educators, and caregivers.

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