

Meaning of Life on Mother Single Parent Who Have Been Pregnant Out of Wedding

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Abstract. Single mothers who have experienced pregnancy out of wedlock can still find meaning in their lives, despite facing the challenges of separation from their partners and navigating pregnancy alone until childbirth. Even in the face of adversity, individuals can transform their lives into ones of greater purpose by progressing through five stages: the stage of suffering, self-acceptance, discovery of life's meaning, meaning realization, and ultimately, living a meaningful life. This study aims to explore the meaning of life for single mothers who have experienced pregnancy out of wedlock. It adopts a qualitative research design using thematic analysis. The participants were five single mothers who met the purposive sampling criteria: women of any age, with children, who had been pregnant out of wedlock, were not victims of sexual violence, and resided in Kupang City. The findings reveal that for these five participants, the primary source of meaning in their lives lies in ensuring their children's happiness and continuing their education. Throughout their journey of finding meaning, they received crucial support from their parents, particularly in helping to care for their children.

Keywords: *Meaning of life, single parent*

Abstrak. Ibu *single parent* yang pernah hamil di luar nikah dapat menemukan makna hidup walaupun harus pisah dari pasangan dan menjalani masa kehamilan seorang diri hingga bersalin. Meskipun sedang dalam masalah, seorang individu dapat mengubah hidupnya menjadi lebih bermakna melalui lima tahap, yaitu, tahap penderitaan, tahap penerimaan diri, tahap menemukan makna hidup, tahap realisasi makna dan tahapan hidup yang bermakna. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk memperoleh gambaran kebermaknaan hidup pada ibu *single parent* yang pernah hamil di luar nikah. Penelitian ini merupakan jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan metode tematik. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah lima orang ibu *single parent* yang pernah hamil di luar nikah dengan metode *purposive sampling* dengan kriteria perempuan dengan rentang usia bebas, memiliki anak, pernah hamil di luar nikah, bukan merupakan korban kekerasan seksual dan berdomisili di Kota Kupang. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kelima partisipan menemukan kebermaknaan hidup, dimana mereka mengambil pelajaran berharga dari masa lalu dan kemudian menentukan tujuan hidup mereka yang akan dicapai dengan berbagai cara yang positif.

Kata kunci: *Makna hidup, Ibu single parent*

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Introduction

Parents play a crucial role in a child's growth and development. A complete parental unit typically consists of both a father and a mother. However, in Indonesia, the number of single mothers exceeds that of single fathers. This is evidenced by data from the Central Statistics Agency (2013), which shows that 14.84% of women are single mothers compared to 4.05% of men as single fathers. Furthermore, a survey by BKKBN (2019) revealed that 47% of pregnancies occur due to mutual affection, 30% out of curiosity, 16% happen unintentionally, and 12% are reported as unwanted pregnancies.

Single mothers are women who take on the role of sole parents to their children due to circumstances such as divorce, the death of a partner, or a decision not to marry following an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. A single mother is also defined as a woman who is not married to the father of her children and assumes full responsibility for their care and needs independently (Utami & Hanani, 2018).

Being an unmarried mother is undoubtedly challenging, as it requires balancing two demanding roles simultaneously. This is particularly difficult for single mothers who lack a stable job. These dual roles often bring various impacts on their daily lives, encompassing economic, psychological, and social challenges. Economically, single mothers may struggle to meet their children's needs with limited income. This includes providing for their education, food, clothing, and other essential needs until the children reach adulthood. Psychologically, single mothers often experience significant stress, sadness, and a heavy sense of responsibility. They may grapple with feelings of anger, depression, guilt, loneliness, and anxiety about the future, compounded by the absence of someone to share their burdens. Socially,

single mothers frequently face negative stigmas and judgment from society due to their marital status. They may endure ridicule, hurtful remarks, and accusations of disrupting other families. Additionally, their inability to fulfill certain needs of their children, often attributed to the absence of a family breadwinner, can lead to further societal scrutiny and marginalization (Zuhairini, 2020).

The economic, psychological, and social impacts experienced by single mothers who have faced pregnancy out of wedlock often lead to mental health challenges, resulting in trauma for these mothers (Mailani & Sano, 2013). Among the mental health issues they face are stress related to sustaining their own lives and those of their families, depression, trauma in forming relationships with the opposite sex, irritability, and even a tendency to limit social interactions with others (Syukur et al., 2021). The experience of being abandoned by a partner during an unplanned pregnancy, which forces a woman to accept the status of a single mother, can be a profound source of pain. However, this suffering can be addressed more effectively if a single mother is able to interpret her experiences positively, persevere in pursuing her goals, and strive to create happiness for her small family. To overcome these challenges and achieve a fulfilling life, single mothers need to find meaning in their lives, enabling them to embrace true happiness (Bastaman, 2007).

Frankl (2003) asserts that the meaning of life is a critical, deeply personal, and highly valued concept, providing individuals with a unique sense of purpose. This uniqueness stems from an individual's freedom to determine how they discover and fulfill their life's meaning. Consequently, finding and achieving life's meaning becomes a personal responsibility that cannot be delegated to others; only the individual can truly experience and understand the significance of their own life (Frankl, 2003). Individuals who perceive their lives as meaningful tend to exhibit a vibrant and purposeful lifestyle, free from feelings of uncertainty in their daily experiences. By attributing meaning to their lives, they uncover a clear sense of direction, encompassing both short-term objectives and long-term aspirations. This purposeful living enables them to adapt effectively to their environment while

maintaining autonomy in discerning what is right or wrong. Furthermore, they come to recognize that life's meaning can emerge not only from pleasant circumstances but also from challenging or painful situations (Bastaman, 2007).

According to Bastaman (2007), achieving a meaningful life involves several stages. The first stage is that of suffering, which refers to the tragic experience of living life without any sense of meaning. During this stage, individuals may encounter painful or tragic events that lead to a sense of emptiness, apathy, boredom, fear, anxiety, and a lack of purpose. These experiences contribute to the perception that life is meaningless. The next stage is self-acceptance, where individuals begin to accept the events that have occurred in their lives and start to understand themselves better. This stage is marked by a shift in attitude, often driven by self-reflection, seeking guidance from experts, gaining new perspectives from others, engaging in spiritual practices, and learning from life experiences. It is at this point that self-awareness begins to emerge. As individuals move forward, they enter the stage of finding the meaning of life. This stage is characterized by the awareness of valuable and important aspects of life. These could include deeply held life values, attitudes, and aspirations that provide a sense of direction and purpose. The following stage is the realization of meaning, where individuals find renewed enthusiasm for life and consciously commit to living in a more positive and purposeful way. This stage is driven by a clear understanding of life's goals and a firm commitment to finding and holding on to life's meaning. Ultimately, the final stage is one of a meaningful life, where the successful discovery and fulfillment of life's meaning brings a profound sense of happiness and fulfillment. Through this journey, individuals find peace and satisfaction in their lives, having made a conscious effort to live according to their deeper values and purpose.

Another study explores the experiences of mothers with children but who are not married, examining how they find meaning in their lives through their children as a source of strength (Anindita & Kahija, 2023). This research aims to provide an understanding of the meaning of life for single mothers who became pregnant out of

wedlock and chose to continue their pregnancies despite being abandoned by their partners.

Method

This research is qualitative research using the phenomenological method. The data in this research was collected using structured interviews conducted directly by the researcher, where the researcher developed questions during the interview process and raised current problems (Creswell, 2015)

Participants in this research were 5 mothers of single parents who have been pregnant out of wedlock with predetermined criteria, including women of free age, have been pregnant out of wedlock, while having children, are mothers single parents and are not victims of sexual violence. Those who are willing to participate in the research then sign informed consent as an agreement to participate in the research. The names of the participants have been disguised to maintain the privacy of the participants.

The data obtained in this research was then analyzed manually using thematic analysis developed by Braun & Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis can be carried out in six stages, including 1). Data recognition, which is done by reading and understanding data; 2). Creating initial code via coding, which is done by marking ideas that are considered important and want to be raised as themes; 3). Theme search is carried out after all interview codes have been coded and arranged in an orderly manner; 4). Theme review, which is carried out when all themes have been collected and the author crosses out themes that are deemed inappropriate; 5). Defining and renaming themes, after determining the appropriate theme the author will name the theme according to the idea of the theme; 6). Create a report, after naming the themes, the author brings together all the themes in the form of charts, diagrams and so on to be reported.

Data from interviews that were analyzed manually were analyzed using thematic analysis developed by Braun & Clarke (2006). The results of interviews and analysis found five main themes related to the mother's depiction of the meaning of

life single support who have been pregnant out of wedlock, the five themes include; 1). Rejection of self and circumstances, 2). Processing through problems, 3). Children and the future are valuable things in life, 4). Building a commitment to becoming a better person, and 5). Make peace with yourself and your situation.

Result

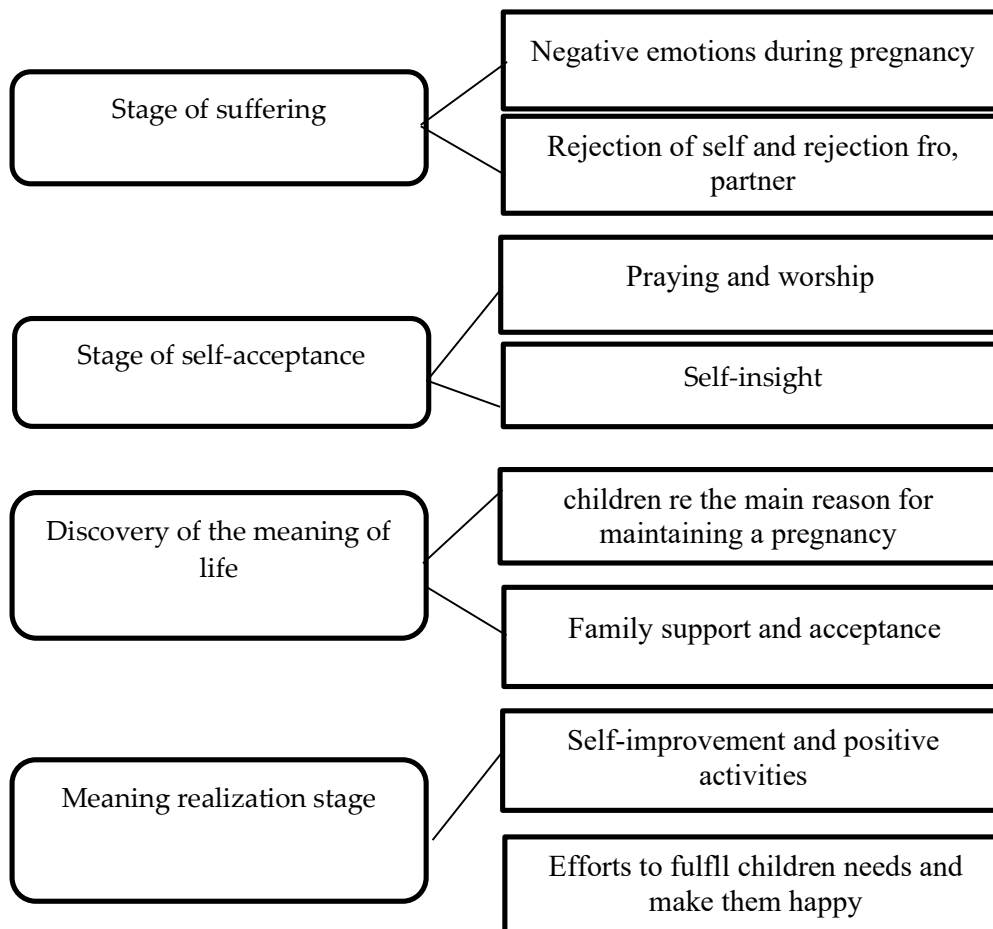
This research was conducted on 5 mothers single parents who have been pregnant out of wedlock, with the following details:

Table 1

Participant Demographic Data

No	Age	Domicile	Profession	Child Age
Putri	21 years	Kupang	Student	3 years
Intan	24 years old	Kupang	Student	2 years
Mawar	17 years	Kupang	Student	1 Year 1 Month
Melati	29 years	Kupang	Seamstress	10 years
Tari	37 Years	Kupang	Teacher	14 years

As a result of the thematic data analysis, there were 5 themes and 12 subthemes found in the interviews which can be observed in the chart below;



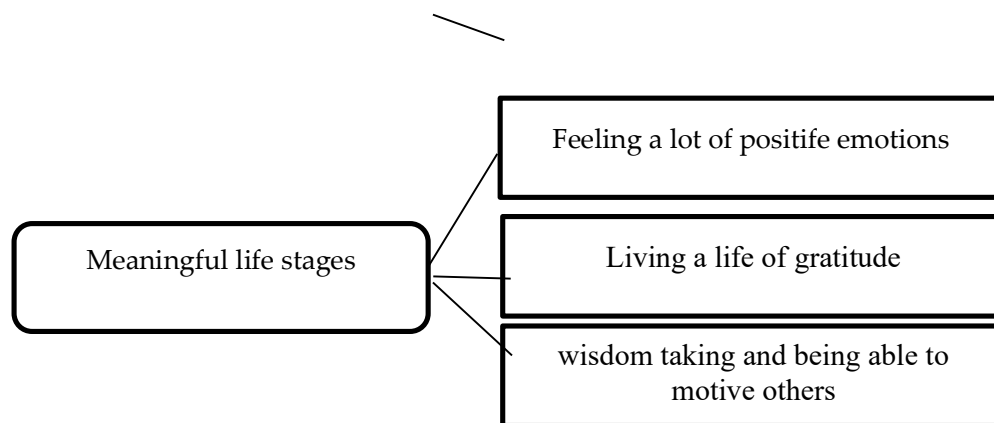


Figure 1.
Theme and subtheme chart

Theme 1: Rejection of Self and Circumstances

Getting pregnant at a young age is certainly not a pleasant thing for a woman. A woman who becomes pregnant out of wedlock then has to assume the status of a single mother because the absence of responsibility from the man certainly makes a woman reject the pregnancy she is experiencing, which is shown through negative responses and the negative feelings she feels. Rejection of self and circumstances from a mother single parent namely feelings of uncertainty, fear, anxiety, feeling very careless, feelings of low self-esteem, shame, regret, feeling not ready to become a mother, and even intending to commit suicide. Putri, Intan, Mawar, Melati and Tari are the 5 mothers of single parents who never felt ready to be a mother and felt a lot of negative feelings. The following are statements from the five participants regarding their feelings.

At that time, I had mixed feelings, anxiety, and fear, and I also thought about committing suicide (Putri; 24-25)

I always feel that I was very careless and I am very sorry (Putri; 42-43)

When I found out that Be was pregnant, I felt sad, scared, anxious, and like Be's son didn't know what to do. Like Beta, I'm confused about how to tell my parents if I am pregnant (Mawar; 16-18)

At that time, when I took the first test, I woke up early in the morning, when I saw the two red lines when I saw the test pack, I was happy. After being happy, and coming out of the toilet, Mother started to feel afraid. Because a pregnancy without our expectations is a very embarrassing thing for the family. Not to mention that at that time my mother was still 23 years old, still young, not ready to be a mother, and so on (Tari; 21-26)

Theme 2: Processing Through Problems

It is not easy for an individual to get out of the problems they are experiencing. To get out of the problems experienced during pregnancy, of course, the participants went through a painful process. During Putri's pregnancy, Mawar and Melati took detrimental actions by deciding to abort their pregnancies in various ways. However, through the support of those closest to them, the participants then went through their problems until they found the right solution that did not harm themselves or others. After successfully getting out of their problems, the participants were slowly able to accept themselves and their situation. The following are statements from participants Putri, Mawar and Melati related to the negative actions taken and statements from the five participants regarding their self-acceptance:

In the beginning, I had thoughts of having an abortion because of coercion from my partner (Putri; 41-42)

I haven't left the house for 3 years, sis (Putri; 71)

The first time I knew that I was pregnant, I was scared to death. That's why I'm so confused about how old you are. I want to kill this unborn child. Until now, I've been taking all kinds of medicine because I want to lose my son. But, maybe God wants Beta to kill this Son, God wants this Son to live. So, may God accept my desire to give birth to this Son. In the end, I told the neighbour's aunt, only the neighbour's aunt knew that the elderly aunt and the elderly aunt were very angry. That's just

7 months pregnant, parents know. During those 7 months, I did not have an examination, sonde had an ultrasound, and basically never consulted any doctor (Mawar; 24-33)

Through problems, the participants received support from those closest to them which then became strengthening until they were finally able to accept themselves and their situation. The following are statements from the five participants regarding the support of those closest to them and their self-acceptance:

The only people who were there when I was pregnant were my family, especially my parents. Father and Mama who always help me. I have parents who still accept me, they still love me even though I made a big mistake which embarrassed them at that time. When I was pregnant, I felt the sincerity of my father and mother. Those who always give me strength are why I can survive until now (Putri; 79-84)

In the beginning, it was difficult to accept it. Moreover, at that time I had a boyfriend who wanted to be responsible, so it was very difficult. But indeed I have a mother who gives me strength to continue. I have a mother who always gives me advice if I'm wrong, only children know nothing. Mama told me, that if I die, it means I have committed a big sin. From there, I could slowly accept that I had a situation. From there I started leaving the house, with Mama for worship and Mama also taught me to always pray to ask for strength from God (Melati; 52-59)

Theme 4: Building Commitment to Becoming a Better Person

When individuals successfully overcome difficult problems and find valuable things in life, they will commit to becoming a better person to maintain these valuable things. Children and the future are something worth fighting for by Putri, Intan, Mawar, Melati and Tari. To make their children happy, they go through

their respective processes by continuing to college, continuing their studies, and working for their children's happiness. Following are the statements by Putri, Intan, Mawar, Melati, and Tari regarding their commitment to becoming better individuals:

I want to maintain this valuable thing by becoming a better person. I want to be a mother who is responsible for all my children's needs. I am also ready to care for and make my children happy in every way. Now I am more grateful for what I have, I think my child is a valuable treasure for me, I also don't want to give up just because I was pregnant so I gave up on going to college, I don't want to. I will remain enthusiastic to finish my studies well (Intan; 179-186)

My goal in life now is just to finish high school well and I want to go to college. Right now, I want to care about the man who left Me. Now my child is 1 year old, he can crawl, he can call Mama, now he just wants to go to college and he wants to take care of the boy he left behind Beta (Mawar; 111-115)

For that activity, I sew. I now earn money by sewing. Sometimes the stitching is indeed just a little, but I still get the blessing from it. I always pray for God to give me blessings so that I can fulfil my children's needs (Melati; 141-144)

Yes, make your child happy. The first is that Mom has more time with him to lie in the room and talk about things.....everyday things. While hugging in the room, while playing crazy, while telling stories, while hugging, while telling stories about simple things like that. So sometimes, or when Mom comes to school, Mom will definitely hug and kiss and then Mom will say Mom loves Jordan. Have you ever told me that you love Jordan? Then he said Iiaaaa Ma that's it... so there's more physical contact. I don't know, but one day I can hug him dozens of

times. Mother hugs and kisses on the forehead kisses on the cheek. So it has become a habit. So sometimes Grandpa's mother is too busy and hasn't had time to hug and kiss, she will come and say Ma... I haven't kissed today. So how do I show that He is truly valuable, even though He is alone? It's one of those simple things that isn't material, but it's a small thing, the little love that we give doesn't have to be material. We show him simple things so that he realizes that he is truly loved (Tari; 180-195)

Theme 5: Making Peace With Yourself and Circumstances

When an individual is faced with serious problems, they will go through a long and painful process until they finally find positive values which are taken as valuable lessons to start a new, better life. The participants Putri, Intan, Mawar, Melati and Tari were able to overcome their problems during pregnancy through a long process. When they can get out of their problems, there will be feelings of happiness and gratitude for being able to accept their situation and more than that love themselves. Having been pregnant and being a single mother is not an obstacle for them to pursue a better future. The following are the statements of the five participants regarding feelings of happiness and gratitude after going through the problems that befell them:

If you say you're happy, you're really happy living your life now, even though you're a single mother and still at school. It's always difficult to become a champion and want to rise, but slowly you can rise. The grandfather who said earlier said that he was happy because, even though it was difficult, he was still able to get through this problem and got to the point where he is now, and his family has never left him behind. Beta is also happy because there is a child who every time he comes home from school, definitely calls Beta Mama so he is happy because there is someone who greets Beta when he comes home (Mawar; 137-144)

I'm always happy. I'm happy because I was able to overcome the problem I had. I'm also relieved because before I used to cry all the time, but now God has given me the strength so I can get through everything until now. Anyway, I'm always happy and grateful (Melati; 146-149)

Ouch.. how is it? Difficult. Honestly, it took me 10 years to accept that situation. 10 years. I want to say 10 years. I thought it was 10 years, then I remembered again about the failure in marriage. If you want to think selfishly, it's not about me. I can have a new partner, I can get married, but what about this child? That's more difficult. But it's more than that... how do we continue to show great love with great responsibility to children? So, we pour out all our love to him already. So that he doesn't feel unwanted, then our love will only be small (Tari; 154-162)

Discussion

From the results of interviews and data analysis, the following themes were obtained: 1). Rejection of self and circumstances, 2). Processing through problems, 3). Children and the future are valuable things in life, 4). Building a commitment to becoming a better person, and 5). Make peace with yourself and your situation. These themes were obtained after going through the process of coding and then taken from the results of interviews that are most often told or told with great emotion to be appointed as themes.

The first theme identified in this research is the stage of suffering. At this stage, participants experienced a range of negative emotions, self-rejection, rejection of their circumstances, and rejection from their partners. These negative emotions included guilt, anxiety, uncertainty, anger, sadness, fear, and low self-esteem. Such feelings arose due to pregnancies outside of marriage and abandonment by their partners, leading participants to feel ashamed and ultimately decide to terminate their

pregnancies. This finding aligns with research by Sejati et al. (2023) on the resilience of adolescents who experienced out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Their study revealed that negative emotions, such as shock, shame, sadness, confusion, discomfort, and a sense of unpreparedness for pregnancy, often culminated in attempts to terminate the pregnancy.

Researchers also found that single mothers who became pregnant out of wedlock often faced rejection from their partners, leaving them feeling hopeless, disappointed, sad, and embarrassed, with some even considering abortion through various means. These single mothers were abandoned by their partners for unclear reasons, such as a sudden loss of communication, being coerced into abortion, lack of parental approval, or differences in beliefs. This finding aligns with research conducted by Sarah (2021), which revealed that unmarried mothers often remain single due to challenges in holding their partners accountable, abrupt cessation of communication, or the disapproval of their partner's parents. These factors lead many women to decide against marriage and continue as single mothers.

The second theme identified in this research is the stage of self-acceptance. Participants undergo a prolonged process to achieve this stage. Initially, they isolate themselves, cry, and experience persistent feelings of self-pity regarding the events they faced. Over time, participants begin to accept their circumstances through prayer, worship, and receiving advice emphasizing the value of children. This finding aligns with research by Arif (2021), which highlights that self-insight can help individuals overcome life challenges. Through self-insight, individuals can recognize, understand, and process their problems, enabling them to adopt constructive behaviors moving forward.

A prominent theme in this research is the discovery of the meaning of life. Children and family support are significant factors that motivate participants to persevere and continuously improve themselves to ensure the happiness of their children and families. Alfaruki and Indrawati (2021) found that family support serves as a source of strength for single mothers as they navigate life with their children.

Beyond the presence of children, family members also provide critical support, including prayers, advice, motivation, and assistance with childcare, particularly when single mothers are engaged in work responsibilities.

The fourth theme identified in this research is the meaning realization stage. At this stage, participants begin to engage in positive activities aligned with their potential, such as sewing, teaching, offering English lessons, and other constructive endeavors. Participants also start building a commitment to self-improvement, demonstrated by continuing their education, pursuing careers in their respective fields, and striving to create happiness for their children. This includes consistently picking their children up from school, assisting them with homework, and spending quality time playing together. Supporting this finding, Bhawono (2016) conducted a study revealing that single mothers who experienced unplanned pregnancies chose to let go of their past relationships and focus on rebuilding their lives. These mothers engaged in positive activities and directed their energy toward their work to meet their own needs and provide for their children.

The final theme identified in this research is meaningful life. After navigating all the stages, single mothers eventually reach a stage marked by experiencing numerous positive emotions, living with gratitude, deriving lessons from their experiences, and inspiring others. This finding is supported by research conducted by Sahertian and Huwae (2023), which conceptualizes the meaning of life as a state where individuals live with enthusiasm, happiness, self-pride, and a clear sense of purpose. They actively engage in positive activities and extract valuable lessons from the challenges they face.

Conclusion

This research aims to obtain an overview of the mother's process of finding the meaning of life single parent who has been pregnant out of wedlock. Mother's discovery of the meaning of life single parent obtained through 5 stages, namely the suffering stage, the self-acceptance stage, the discovery of the meaning of life stage, the meaning realization stage and the meaningful life stage.

The level of suffering is a tragic or painful process experienced by the mother single parent due to pregnancy out of wedlock and abandonment of a spouse. Guilt, fear, anxiety, shame and low self-esteem are negative emotions that are always felt at this stage. The self-acceptance stage is characterized by self-insight in motivating yourself to get out of the problems you face. Self-insight can be formed through a religious attitude and better self-understanding. The stage of finding the meaning of life occurs when the mother single parent finds things that are considered important and valuable in life. These valuable things can be children, family, dreams and work. The stage of realizing meaning is mother single parent finding passion in their lives then building a commitment to becoming a better person. The stage of meaningfulness of life is the stage where the individual has succeeded in getting out of problems that feel very heavy. Finding the meaning of life can bring feelings of gratitude, happiness and pride in oneself. Through this discovery of the meaning of life, individuals can learn a valuable lesson.

Suggestion

Through this research, it is hoped that it can help participants to develop happiness in life and be able to develop positive emotions within themselves by writing a daily journal as a way of expressing the emotions they feel, as well as being able to develop their potential. For families, it is hoped that this research will provide broader insight for families so that the family becomes the most comfortable place for participants to express their emotions. For further research, it is hoped that this research will become reference material and consideration so that future researchers can dig deeper into the maternal activities of single parents after giving birth because this study did not explore data about the maternal activities of single parents after giving birth.

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