

Psychological Well-Being of Single Mothers in Village

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Abstract. This study explores the psychological well-being of single mothers in Kuanheum Village, Kupang Regency. As single mothers face both emotional and financial challenges, their psychological condition deserves further study. The research used a descriptive quantitative approach with 52 participants. Data were collected using the Psychological Well-Being Scale based on Ryff's six dimensions. Results show that most participants (61.5%) had a moderate level of psychological well-being, with personal growth as the most developed dimension and positive relations with others as the least. These findings underscore the need for community support to enhance the psychological well-being of single mothers, especially in rural settings.

Keywords: *Psychological Well-Being, Single Mothers*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi kesejahteraan psikologis ibu tunggal di Desa Kuanheum, Kabupaten Kupang. Ibu tunggal menghadapi tantangan emosional dan finansial, kondisi psikologis mereka layak untuk diteliti lebih lanjut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif deskriptif dengan 52 partisipan. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan Skala Kesejahteraan Psikologis berdasarkan enam dimensi Ryff. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar partisipan (61,5%) memiliki tingkat kesejahteraan psikologis yang sedang, dengan pertumbuhan pribadi sebagai dimensi yang paling berkembang dan hubungan positif dengan orang lain yang paling rendah. Temuan ini menggarisbawahi perlunya dukungan masyarakat untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan psikologis ibu tunggal, terutama di daerah pedesaan.

Kata kunci: *Kesejahteraan Psikologis, Ibu Tunggal*

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Introduction

In the context of Indonesian society, family remains a fundamental unit that ideally consists of both parents playing complementary roles. However, due to various factors such as divorce, death, or abandonment, many women are forced to assume the dual role of caregiver and breadwinner, becoming single mothers (Vania et al, 2024). This condition often results in a disproportionate psychological burden, especially when it occurs in rural settings with limited resources and strong sociocultural expectations.

Single mothers are at a higher risk of experiencing psychological stress due to the challenges they face in raising children alone, managing household responsibilities, and dealing with economic instability and social stigma. These challenges can significantly impact their psychological well-being, which encompasses self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth, as conceptualized by Ryff (1989).

Kuanheum Village, which is located in Amabi Oefeto Subdistrict, Kupang Regency, is a rural village in East Nusa Tenggara that presents a distinct sociocultural and economic profile. Most of the residents engage in subsistence agriculture and livestock farming. According to 2024 data, the village is home to 52 single mothers, spread across its four hamlets. These women, many of whom are widowed or divorced, live with limited economic means and often lack adequate social support systems. Their monthly incomes range between IDR 500,000 and IDR 2,000,000, which is well below the national minimum wage, while they simultaneously bear full responsibility for child-rearing and household maintenance.

Despite the increasing prevalence of single motherhood in Indonesia, particularly in rural areas, research that explores the psychological well-being of single mothers remains scarce. There is a lack of empirical studies that investigate how women in structurally disadvantaged settings, such as village Kuanheum, cope with their dual roles and maintain psychological health. Therefore, this study seeks

to fill this gap by providing a descriptive analysis of the psychological well-being of single mothers in village Kuanheum, using Ryff's multidimensional model. Through this research, it is hoped that the findings can inform community-based interventions and policy initiatives that support single mothers in rural areas.

Single mothers are women who carry the responsibilities of the family without the presence of a partner, whether due to divorce, death, or abandonment. In fulfilling this role, they often face complex challenges, both physically and socially. Physically, they are required to perform multiple tasks typically shared between two parents—earning income, raising children, managing the household, and dealing with social pressure simultaneously. The high workload and lack of rest can lead to chronic fatigue and a general decline in physical health.

Psychologically, single mothers are at risk of experiencing prolonged stress, anxiety, loneliness, and even depression, particularly when lacking adequate social support. Economic instability, societal stigma, and overwhelming responsibility for their children can disrupt emotional balance and lower self-esteem. They may also struggle with decision-making, feel burdened by their dual roles, and have limited opportunities for self-development. These conditions can result in a diminished quality of life, especially in terms of mental and emotional well-being.

In this context, psychological well-being emerges as a crucial construct for deeper investigation. Ryff's model (1989; 2013) outlines six core dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. This framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how individuals, particularly those in demanding roles like single mothers, can maintain optimal psychological functioning. Studying the psychological well-being of single mothers is therefore essential to assess how they adapt to life pressures, maintain mental health, and create meaningful lives despite facing structural and emotional hardships.

Prior studies have shown mixed results. Lena et al. (2021) reported moderate well-being among adolescent single mothers in Kupang. In contrast, Mawaddah &

Soebardjo (2023) found low well-being among rural single mothers in Yogyakarta due to limited social and institutional support. These discrepancies underscore the need to investigate psychological well-being within specific local contexts.

This study aims to describe the level of psychological well-being among single mothers in Kuanheum Village, Kupang Regency. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of research in positive psychology by extending its application to rural communities, an area that remains underrepresented in current literature. Practically, it offers baseline data to inform psychosocial interventions and community-based programs that support single mothers facing structural disadvantages.

The selection of Kuanheum Village as the research site is based on its unique demographic and social conditions. Kuanheum is located in the Amabi Oefeto subdistrict of Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. The village is divided into four hamlets, with a population of approximately 1,300 people, most of whom are engaged in subsistence farming and livestock rearing. Although the village benefits from fertile land and agricultural potential, it also faces a range of socioeconomic challenges, including limited access to mental health services, education, and economic opportunities.

According to 2024 data, Kuanheum is home to 52 single mothers, spread across its four hamlets. This is a considerable number for a rural village and reflects a broader trend in Kupang Regency, which recorded the highest percentage of women classified as divorced and still living apart in East Nusa Tenggara, reaching 4.10% in 2023. This makes Kuanheum an appropriate and relevant setting for examining the psychological well-being of single mothers, who must navigate multiple roles under constrained circumstances.

By focusing on this specific rural context, the study highlights an often overlooked population and provides empirical insights to support the development of more contextually grounded and effective community interventions aimed at enhancing the psychological resilience and overall well-being of single mothers.

Method

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach. The research population consisted of 52 single mothers in Kuanheum Village, Amabi Oefeto Subdistrict, Kupang Regency. The research sample consisted of 52 participants, selected using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were: (1) aged 25-50 years, (2) lived in Kuanheum for at least one year, and (3) provided written consent.

Data were collected using the Psychological Well-Being Scale adapted from Ryff (1989) and validated in Indonesia by Ahmad Fadhil (2021). The scale consists of 29 items across six dimensions. Each item is rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). Reliability testing produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.562.

Questionnaires were distributed door-to-door after obtaining approval from village authorities. Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 22.0 with descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions.

Result

Descriptive analysis was conducted to understand the psychological well-being of single mothers in Kuanheum Village. The results showed that the minimum score obtained was 29, while the maximum score was 116. The mean score was 72.5, with a standard deviation of 14.5. These figures indicate a considerable variation in the participants' psychological well-being levels.

Prior to further analysis, a normality test was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method. The result yielded a significance value of 0.200 ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the data were normally distributed. A linearity test was also conducted to examine the relationship among the indicators within the psychological well-being construct. The test showed a significant value of 0.000 for the linearity line and 0.264 ($p > 0.05$) for the deviation from linearity, suggesting that the relationships among the variables were linear.

Table 1.

Psychological Well-being Category of Single Mothers

Category	Score Interval	Frequency	Percentage
Very Low	$X < 51$	0	0%
Low	$51 \leq X < 65.25$	20	38.5%
Moderate	$65.25 \leq X < 79.75$	32	61.5%
High	$79.75 \leq X < 94.25$	0	0%
Very High	$X \geq 94.25$	0	0%
n		52	100%

The results show that most single mothers (61.5%) were in the moderate category, with 38.5% in the low category.

Table 2.

Distribution of Psychological Well-being Aspects

Aspect	Highest Category	Frequency	Percentage
Self-Acceptance	Moderate (15.75 – 19.25)	39	75.0%
Positive Relations with Others	Low (8.75 – 11.25)	22	42.3%
Autonomy	Moderate (11.25 – 13.75)	32	61.5%
Environmental Mastery	Moderate (7 – 13)	44	84.6%
Purpose in Life	Moderate (7 – 13)	45	86.5%
Personal Growth	Moderate (7 – 13)	49	94.2%

These findings indicate that personal growth is the strongest dimension (94.2% moderate), while positive relations with others are the weakest (42.3% in the low category). Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha showed a score of 0.562 for 29 items, indicating acceptable internal consistency for exploratory research.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the overall psychological well-being of single mothers in Kuanheum Village falls predominantly in the moderate category, indicating a balanced yet vulnerable psychological state. Among the six dimensions of Ryff's (1989) psychological well-being model, most participants scored moderately in self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. However, the positive relations with other aspects were found to be predominantly low, suggesting an area of significant concern.

Moderate scores in self-acceptance suggest that while most single mothers can acknowledge their personal strengths and weaknesses, they may still struggle with fully accepting their past or current life circumstances. This finding is in line with previous research that highlights how stigma, past trauma, and economic limitations can hinder the development of self-acceptance among single mothers (Gharaibeh et al., 2020; Nurfachariyah, 2022).

The autonomy dimension also scored moderately, indicating that respondents possess a fair degree of independence in thought and behavior. However, in the context of a rural village where traditional gender roles and communal expectations are strong, autonomy can be limited. Research by Amethysa and Eva (2021) shows that structural gender norms and financial dependence often constrain decision-making capacity among single mothers, particularly in resource-limited settings.

Moderate scores in environmental mastery and purpose in life indicate that most participants can manage daily responsibilities and maintain a sense of direction despite the challenges of single parenthood. These findings reflect a degree of personal resilience and adaptive functioning, as also observed by Lena (2021), who

reported that single mothers with moderate well-being often sustain motivation through faith, responsibility, and goal orientation even in adverse conditions.

The highest-scoring dimension was personal growth, where 94.2% of participants fell within the moderate range. This suggests a strong internal drive for self-improvement, learning, and adaptability. Despite facing emotional and material constraints, many single mothers in rural areas remain oriented toward long-term personal development (Ramdhani, 2014; Iganingrat & Eva, 2021). This could reflect the transformative nature of single motherhood, where new roles and responsibilities provide space for redefinition and maturity.

In contrast, the positive relations with others dimension scored the lowest, with 42.3% of participants categorized as low. This suggests difficulties in establishing or maintaining close and supportive relationships. Social stigma, time constraints, emotional fatigue, and lack of formal support structures may contribute to this deficiency. According to Adilah and Satiningsih (2022), many single mothers report feelings of isolation and exclusion, particularly in communities that hold negative stereotypes about divorced or widowed women.

These findings imply that while internal coping mechanisms and personal development remain strong among single mothers in Kuanheum, there is a significant gap in their social and emotional support systems. Community-based interventions are therefore recommended, focusing on strengthening social connectedness, reducing stigmatization, and creating safe spaces for single mothers to express and manage emotional needs. Promoting inclusive social norms and expanding access to support groups could contribute significantly to improving their overall psychological well-being (Wulan et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The psychological well-being among single mothers in Kuanheum Village is generally at a moderate level, with a need for interventions to improve social connectedness and personal autonomy. The highest dimension was personal growth,

and the lowest was positive relations with others. These findings suggest the need for targeted psychosocial support programs to improve relational and emotional health.

Suggestion

Future research should explore the qualitative experiences of single mothers to gain deeper insight. Policymakers and community leaders should promote programs that strengthen social support, reduce stigma, and improve economic conditions for single mothers. Empowering local health centers to provide mental health support could be a strategic intervention.

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