

## Our Stories: A Woman, A Teenager, A Single Mother Psychological Well-being of a Single Mother Adolescents

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study was to determine the psychological well-being of single mother adolescents. The research method used is qualitative research with a descriptive approach and data collection in the form of interviews. Participants in this study were 3 single mother adolescents with the following characteristics: a) single mother adolescents, b) aged 11-21 years, c) residing in Kupang City. Data collection in this study was carried out using semi-structured interview techniques. The data analysis technique used in this research is data analysis technique before in the field, during in the field, and after in the field. The results of research conducted on the dimensions of psychological well-being for three single mother adolescents found a description of psychological well-being through self-acceptance, self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, the purpose of life, and self-development.

**Keywords:** *Psychological Well-Being, Teenager, Single Mother*

**Abstrak.** Tujuan dari penelitian ini untuk mengetahui kesejahteraan psikologis pada remaja yang berperan sebagai orang tua tunggal. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif dan pengambilan data berupa wawancara. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah 3 orang remaja ibu tunggal dengan karakteristik: berada pada usia remaja 11-21 tahun dan bertempat tinggal di Kota Kupang. Pengambilan data pada penelitian ini dilakukan menggunakan teknik wawancara semi terstruktur. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teknik analisis data sebelum di lapangan, selama di lapangan dan sesudah di lapangan. Hasil penelitian yang dilakukan terhadap eman dimensi kesejahteraan psikologis kepada tiga remaja ibu tunggal maka ditemukan gambaran mengenai kesejahteraan psikologis melalui penerimaan diri penerimaan diri, hubungan positif dengan orang lain, otonomi, kontrol lingkungan, tujuan hidup, dan pengembangan diri.

**Kata kunci:** *Kesejahteraan Psikologis, Remaja, Ibu Tunggal*

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## Introduction

*"Why should I be the one who experienced this? Why should I be pregnant and receive insults from everyone, even from my own family? Why doesn't he want to take responsibility? Why was he not there when I gave birth? I'm stressed. Ever wanted to commit suicide, but this child in the womb strengthened me, I hoped this baby was a girl. Thank you, God."  
(Yani, 20 years old single mother)*

This is a sentence that appeared in an initial interview with NP (20 years) who was pregnant without marriage ties and became a single mother in her teens. Erickson termed adolescence as a period of "identity crisis", a time with various opportunities for conflict, because of the changing social roles that adolescents must face (Hurlock, 2015). Papalia, Old, and Feldman (2009) address that unwanted pregnancy is one of the common problems during the adolescent period.

The Indonesian Health Demographic Survey (2017) shows that 7% of women aged 15-19 have given birth or are pregnant with their first child, 5% have already given birth before and 2% are pregnant with their first child, while according to the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia stated that based on the level of education from 2002-2005, adolescents who experienced the most unwanted pregnancy were those who had higher education levels, namely female students as much as 59.22%, followed by junior high school students 17.70% and those who the smallest junior high school 1.63% (Azinar, 2013).

Adolescents who experience unwanted pregnancy put themselves at risk of physical problems for pregnant adolescents, including being able to experience hypertension and anemia, and more at risk of contracting HIV infection (WHO, 2004), while the consequences in the social environment include adolescents having difficulty getting education and feeling rejection by peers and rejection of responsibility from

male colleagues (Nnodim & Albert, 2016) and lack of social support from their environment (Moseson, Mahanaimy, Dehlendorf & Gerdt, 2019) while the psychological effects experienced by adolescents include experiencing fear, hopelessness, feelings of guilt, shame and avoiding everything related to pregnancy (Olivari, Confalonieri, & Ionio 2011).

The Central Bureau of Statistics (2013) states that in Indonesia the number of single mothers is greater, namely 14.84%, compared to the number of single fathers, which is 4.05%. The tasks single parents have to carry out are challenging. The problems faced are indeed similar to those of parents who have a partner but still, the problems faced are more difficult for one person to bear or manage (Oriyomi, 2011).

A single mother as the head of the family also makes a dual role for the mother as a parent who not only takes care of the child but is also required to work to earn a living for survival. Akmalia (2010) states that the difficulties that often occur in single mothers include: economic difficulties, difficulties in caring for children, and adaptation to the surrounding community. Even the problems and pressures that arise usually come mostly from the community (Rahayu, 2017).

A single mother with a history of adverse events also has negative consequences for the mental health and psychological well-being of a mother which is the most important thing that everyone needs (Logan, Holcombe, Manlove & Ryan, 2007). Nordin, Wahab, and Yunus (2012) explain that the conditions of pregnancy and taking care of children during adolescence greatly affect psychological well-being during adolescence. Single mothers with high adverse events show generally lower levels of psychological well-being during pregnancy and childbirth as well as a higher risk of depression and lower levels of happiness than those who undergo the desired pregnancy (Logan, Holcombe, Manlove & Ryan, 2007).

Ryff (1989) defines psychological well-being as the result of a person's evaluation or judgment of himself which is an evaluation of his life experience and is used to describe an individual's psychological health condition based on fulfilling the criteria for positive psychological function. Ryff (1989) describes a multidimensional approach to measuring a person's psychological well-being which consists of six dimensions, namely self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth.

Psychological well-being is one of the concepts of positive psychology that emphasizes the positive side of a person. The goal is to initiate change that focuses on equipping a person with positive qualities rather than striving to change the negative aspects of life. Huppert (2005) states that psychological well-being is a positive and sustainable life in which individuals can grow and develop. If a single parent has low psychological well-being, it is feared that they will not be able to live life due to prolonged stress, are unable to have good relationships with other people, and cannot set goals for their future life.

In contrast to research from Nordin, Wahab, and Yunus (2012), who found that teenagers who are single parents in KEWAJA have a moderate to high level of happiness because they get coping strategies that reduce the problems experienced by single parent teenagers in general. they focus on following some programs to raise their positive emotions and also focus on their self-development. This makes adolescents who are single parents more able to develop their skills at work and take care of children which has a good impact not only on adolescents but also on their children.

Seeing the importance of psychological well-being for the mental health of adolescents, especially those who are pregnant and have to take care of their children as

single mothers, the researchers are interested in researching on topics psychological well-being of a single mother adolescent

### **Method**

This research is a type of qualitative research with a descriptive approach. Data collection techniques in this study, using interview techniques. The interview technique used in this study is a semi-structured interview technique, which is a data collection technique by designing a series of questions that are arranged in an interview list but the list is used to guide and not dictate the interview. Participants in this study were three people who have characteristics as listed below:

- 1) Teenage girls with an age range of 11-21 years when experience unwanted pregnancy (KTD)
- 2) Teenage girls who are currently single mothers and are not married.
- 3) Residing in Kupang City.

In this study, the researcher acts as the main human instrument and serves to determine the focus of the research, select informants as data sources, collect data, analyze data and make conclusions on the data obtained. Analysis in qualitative research is carried out before entering the field, during the field, and after completion in the field using the Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2015 model. At the time of the interview, the researcher had analyzed the interviewee's answers. If the answers obtained after being analyzed are not satisfactory, the researcher will continue the interview again until data that is considered credible is obtained (Sugiyono, 2015).

The triangulation technique used in this study is the source triangulation technique. This technique includes Significant Other (SO) to strengthen the data previously obtained using the interview technique with participants. Because the role of

the significant other is very important, the significant other included in this study was taken based on the choices of the participants, considering that participants know better who knows about their lives.

## **Result**

### 1. Overview Of Participant 1's Interview Result (Yani)

#### a. Self-acceptance

Yani describes herself as a mother who works hard and is responsible because she can give birth to her child and she's responsible for the choices that she has made to keep going. The following is Yani's statement:

*"I am a mother who works hard, is responsible....I can give birth to my child because I am responsible, I have taken this path, I have to keep going. I raised her with the results of my work, I have met her needs, I will always try for him."*

#### b. Positive Relationships with Others

Yani said that she is very grateful to have given God a daughter and she is happy because she has become a mother to her child. Yani said that she loved her child very much, always wanted to be close to her child, and she would give love to her child because she thought that was the most important. The following is Yani's statement:

*"Very grateful, I am very happy to have a daughter that God entrusted for me. I am happy that I am her mother and very happy about that. I love her, and I want to always be close, the point is I am grateful to have her"*

#### c. Autonomy

Currently, Yani has a business selling online and looks after her parents' business. Yani and her mother help each other to work and take care of her child. Yani said that the proceeds from her work would be used for her and

her child's needs and she also saved too. According to her, she has to fight for his family and help her parents. The following is Yani's statement:

*"Currently I am selling at kiosk and selling online stuff". "My child and my family... I have to fight for them, help them. Also now, work is an important thing for me because we always have needs and I also save some of my money too"*

d. Environmental Mastery

When Yani has problems, she will usually go to the room to be alone and cry. Yani also prayed to God because if she responded to this situation with unstable emotion then it would be chaotic so according to her, it was better to calm down and pray that her heart was peaceful. The following is Yani's statement:

*"Usually when there is a problem I always cry in my room and pray to God and tell my friends, they give me strength and patience because life is not easy as turning your palms....I Usually, being alone in a room, because if I get carried away with emotions, I'm sure things will be chaotic so it's better to be quiet, calm, and pray for a peaceful heart."*

e. Purpose of life

Yani has a goal that she wants to have a permanent job in which she thinks that permanent job is to have her own business. The following is the statement of Yani:

*"...I don't think too far, but I usually imagine that it will be good if the life of both of us will be fine. I want to have a permanent job, she can be provided for and can go to school"*

f. Self-development

Yani develops her potential by continuing to try and be enthusiastic to cultivate her current business. Yani's also saving money so that she can build

her own business, although according to her it is just a little because she also has to provide for herself and her child. The following is Yani's statement:

*"I keep trying and passionate about cultivating this business.....That's what I said earlier, saving. But it is a little complicated because there are many needs, but I have saved a little to have my own business too. My own business, that's what I mean when I said I want to have a permanent job"*

## 2. Overview Of Participant 2's Interview Result (Rani)

### a. Self-Acceptance

Rani said that she was a successful single mother and it was all because she had given love to her child and her child was very close to her. The following is Rani's statement:

*"I feel like a successful single mother when I can make my child happy even in this situation. I've also worked hard to fulfill his needs and my mine"*

### b. Positive Relationships with Others

Rani said that her feeling for her son was a feeling that she had never felt with other people, like a feeling of love that she had never felt before. Rani always wants to be near his son. The following is Rani's statement:

*"How can I explain it... it's not even just love, like a day without him makes me feel empty, I want to be with him every day. How could it be... like a feeling that I never felt with other people, every time I go I have to be with him. I don't want to be far away from him. Like a feeling of love that I have never felt before"*

### c. Autonomy

Not only love, as a single mother Rani must also divide her time to work to meet her needs and her son. Rani stated that she had worked hard. The salary that she earns will be saved for their needs and her son is a priority compared to her personal needs. The following is Rani's statement:

*"I have also worked so hard to fulfill his needs....When I get money or a salary, I save more for my child's needs than for my desires... Or maybe"*



*when my friend invites me for vacation or hangout, I prefer to be with my son at home and from that, I can save the money for my son"*

**d. Environmental Mastery**

When Rani faced a problem, Rani will take time to be alone so she can calm down and think about what she should do next. The following is Rani's statement:

*"So far, being alone is the most effective. If I am alone and calm myself down, I can think well, I can meditate. Unless I can't anymore, I'll tell the person I trust. Because if emotions continue not to calm me down, I think it will make things get worse"*

**e. Purpose of life**

Rani is currently focused on her son and plans for her son to go to school and fulfill their needs. Rani also hopes to have a complete family for life in the future. The following is Rani's statement:

*"Yes, I work and next year he will get an education... I meant, kindergarten and now I have a one-year contract job and from that, I saved half of my salary and when my contract expires, I will look for another job because it can cover his needs. So my salary will be half for school fees and the other half for daily needs. Now the planning is still with him and my focus is also on him. Now that I am also close to someone too because I know he would want a complete family, I have also talked about this with my parents and, also my child is close to him...my boyfriend I have also discussed with my boyfriend about What do I do in the future"*

**f. Self-development**

Rani develops her potential by working in fields related to journalism and Rani can also sell, therefore, while Rani manages the homestay, she also sells there. The following is Rani's statement:

*"I work in the part I love.. its journalism, so I enjoy it. Because that's my potential, I can also sell and manage a job from my parents, namely homestay, so I have a lot of ability to sell and from there"*

### **3. Overview Of Participant 3's Interview Result (Yanti)**

#### **a. Self-Acceptance**

Yanti revealed that she is a person who never gives up, it's all because she has a figure who is always be the reason to keep fighting and it's her daughter.

The following is Yanti's statement:

*"Never give up I think... because I have only one strength, my daughter. For example, if I start to give up, I think why should I give up? I already have a child so I have to keep fighting for her, whatever it is. Before there was my child, my life was a mess"*

#### **b. Positive Relationships with Others**

Yanti said that her belief is the belief in God and her strength is her daughter, just look at his daughter's smile can make her strong when she is tired. The following is Yanti's statement:

*"There is one belief, that is the belief in God which is my strongest belief and also my daughter. She becomes a strength for me, for example when I get home from study and feel so tired and, if I just see her smile it gives me strength and my tiredness is gone, and yes, she is everything to me"*

#### **c. Autonomy**

Half of Yanti's salary is used to save money for the future of her child because now her focus is to raise her child so that her child can grow up to be strong and strong and even more successful than her mother. The following is Yanti's statement:

*Anyway, through my current job, I saved money for my child's future and her happiness. My focus right now is to raise my child so that she can grow up to be strong and strong and be more successful than her mother"*

**d. Environmental Mastery**

Yanti revealed that when she is stressed because of a problem with someone like being bullied, she will usually stay away from the situation and prefer to go to a quiet place until things calm down. The following is Yanti's statement:

*"Usually when I am stressed because of someone, I will avoid and going to a quiet place to relieve the stress. When I calm down then I come back but if I still get bullied I prefer to shut myself in my room until the environment is calm then I Exit."*

**e. Purpose of life**

Yanti's goal at this point is that she wants to finish college and have a permanent job to meet her child's needs. The following is Yanti's statement:

*"The goal is that I'm currently studying so when I graduate in the future I want to have a job and meet the needs of my child"*

**f. Self-development**

According to Yanti, the way to develop her potentials is to continue to be confident and continue to learn to speak in front of many people. Also besides, Yanti is active in continuing to participate in activities that help her develop his potential, namely that she becomes an assembly at the church as a teacher, she also continues to participate in activities from his office, namely conducting counseling in the field such as to the prison for children and adults. Besides that, Yanti also teaches in PAUD. The following is Yanti's statement:

*"For me, the most important thing is to have confidence and keep learning to be able to speak in front of people, and my office working in the field of a field extension. The counseling was about religion and how to live positively"*

## **Discussion**

### **1. Self-Acceptance**

Ryff (1989) describes that individuals who have self-acceptance show characteristics such as positive attitudes towards themselves, acknowledging and accepting various aspects of themselves, both good and bad. The concept of self-acceptance by Ryff (1989) was seen from the three participants through the statement that they are a single mother who is responsible, hardworking, and a successful single mother. In this case, they always give love and affection to their children and provide for their children's needs. Another positive thing shown is a change for the better after they become single mothers, namely being more mature in solving problems they face and never giving up on raising their children.

From the statement above, the three single mothers can see and find positive things in themselves and evaluate themselves positively. This is in line with the opinion of Ellis (in Bernard & Terjesen, 2013) that one part of self-acceptance is that even if a negative event occurs such as lack of success, criticism, rejection from others and the individual will continue to be proud and accept themselves unconditionally. means that the individual does not rate their self-worth negatively.

Shepard (in Bernard, 2013) states that self-acceptance can be achieved by tolerating oneself that there are imperfections in some parts. The three participants

realized that they too had weaknesses in themselves as single mothers. They are still quick-tempered, impatient in dealing with their children, and quickly feel stressed under pressure. In this case, the three participants realized that apart from advantages, they also had disadvantages.

However, the three participants have a solution for this namely, they will choose to calm down first by going to a room or a quiet place so that they don't rush to act when their emotional state is unstable. This is in line with Langer's theory (in Carson and Langer, 2006) that when there is self-acceptance, there is also the ability to control various emotional difficulties which include uncontrollable anger and depression.

Ryff (1989) states that self-acceptance is the ability to accept oneself as a whole, both present and past. The past of the three participants described them with a sad thing, a series of bad relationships, messy lives, and parenting experiences which were events that shaped them to become who they are today.

The three participants took their past as a lesson and they were grateful because the past made them mothers and brought good changes in their lives such as encouraging them to try harder, study, and work, and even open up to others that they are mothers. single. This is in line with research by Olivarie, Confalonieri, and Onio (2011) that teenage pregnancy will cause tremendous fear, but also make teenagers more mature.

## **2. Positive Relationships with Others**

All three participants felt happy with the presence of their children in their lives. According to the three participants, their children are a figure of encouragement, comfort and, strength for them. The three participants also always wanted to keep trying to be responsible parents and all that was done for their

children. This is in line with Fromm's (2018) theory which explains that when someone loves another person, there will be a sense of caring for that person and wanting to take care of him. Love also means responsibility, someone who loves will respond to the psychic and physical needs of the person he loves.

The relationship of the three participants with their current parents is also well established although it takes time to feel the changes that occur, especially when their parents find out that they are pregnant and scold them for what happened. The three participants also realized that at that time they disappointed their parents. But over time, their relationship with their parents is well established according to them, their parents continue to be responsible for them, accept the presence of their children and even help guide them to become single mothers.

Previous research found that the poor relationship between families and pregnant adolescents is a problem that will be experienced by adolescents (Udmuangpia, Nordin, Worawong, Tanglakmankhonge & Bloom, 2017) but because of the family support of the three participants, it becomes very important for their well-being. This is also in line with the findings of research on single mothers conducted by Nordin, Wahab, and Yunus (2012) that support from the closest people given to adolescents is one of the most important things that support their psychological well-being.

The environment views that pregnant teenage girls are bad teenagers and usually they will be humiliated by their environment and their families will get a bad reputation from their environment (Udmuangpia, Nordin, Worawong, Tanglakmankhonge & Bloom, 2017). This is in line with what was experienced by the three participants. They get negative words from those around them who view them as bad teenagers. Even these words also refer to the parents of the

participants. However, this only happens during pregnancy and changes again as before when giving birth. All three participants said that it didn't last long and even got better than before. The environment even accepts their child by being happy with the birth of their child and loves their child too. The environment even praised that their lives are much better now.

Relationships with co-workers and college friends are also good, and the three participants also have good friends and build deep relationships with their friends. According to the three participants, their best friend is someone who is always there to listen to them, even when there are problems that they feel they can't solve on their own. This is in line with research from Yulianingsih and Masykur (2019) which found that a single mother needs social support in the process of parenting and acceptance of the situation and apart from family, support from other parties such as friends and neighbors is very meaningful to them.

### **3. Autonomy**

The three participants in their role as single mothers can divide their time to work, take care of children, and even go to college. According to them, whatever they are doing is all about them and their children, even they are saving for long-term needs such as living expenses and their children's education. This is in line with the theory of Layliyah (2013), which describes that a single mother is a picture of a tough woman who can take care of the household, take care of children and also earn a living. A single mother performs various roles in her family and everything is done by herself, she doubles as a mother and also becomes a father and everything she does is for her family.

When faced with a problem, the three participants preferred to calm down by going to a quiet place, praying, and looking for a solution to the problem. When the problems they face are difficult for them to solve, then they will tell their friends and determine what they should do. The same thing was also expressed by a significant other and in line with research from Malik, Astuti, and Yulianti (2015) that the experience of adolescents during pregnancy also raises a new view or attitude where they will become more mature, responsible and manage their economy well. The three participants are more mature in dealing with problems, independently and have their own choices for what they will decide although, in some parts, they still need a listener for the problems they face all choices are still determined by themselves.

#### **4. Environmental Mastery**

Ryff (1989) environment mastery is the ability to choose or create a good environment for his psychological condition and physical condition. The three participants when faced with a problem or unpleasant situation and caused stress or anger, would prefer to be alone, or leave for a while from the situation to calm down. According to them calming down and being alone is the best way, because when they respond when they are angry or stressed it will only make things worse.

Taking a break for a while to calm down also allows them to think more calmly to find a solution for what they need to do. In addition, being alone also helps them to evaluate whether the problem occurred because of their own fault or not, if it is not their own fault, they still have to learn to be better.

They also take care of their physical condition, when they realize that the tasks and responsibilities they are doing now require a lot of time and energy. When



there is a lot of work, they will make the best use of their time so that there is also time to rest. They need to be able to manage their time at work and take care of their children so that everything is well organized and does not make them difficult.

## **5. Purpose of Life**

The three participants have plans and goals for the future, namely to get a permanent job and have enough income to meet the needs of themselves and their children. They also make plans to send their children to school, finish college, find work and, build their businesses. Therefore, the three current participants always save some of their work to be able to achieve their planned goals.

All three participants have clear goals and they are also consistent with what they are doing now to achieve the goals they want. This is in line with Adler's theory (in, Feist and Feist, 2014) which explains that when thoughts, feelings and, actions lead to one goal or goal, then an individual will move consistently towards what is their goal.

## **6. Personal Development**

Each participant realizes their potential and continues to strive to develop their potential. In addition, as single mothers, the three participants realized that they still had to move forward and were open to learning. Through their parents, they learn to raise children, and from all the problems they face make they learn to be more mature and continue to push themselves to try harder to achieve their goals. This is in line with Adler's theory (in Feist & Feist, 2014) regarding social interest where a person will develop the potential they have where it is based on basic fighting power because the individual realizes that they have feelings of

incompleteness and it is natural as an incentive to they can achieve a success which is the ultimate goal they set.

### **Conclusion**

The results of research conducted on the dimensions of psychological well-being to three single mother adolescents found a description of psychological well-being, namely that the three single mother adolescents had self-acceptance which was described by looking at and evaluating themselves positively and still respecting and knowing how to deal with their respective shortcomings and look at their past in a positive light. The three participants were able to build positive relationships with children, family, environment, and friendship well. As single mothers, the three participants had autonomy, they functioned fully and were able to make decisions independently, were able to allocate their time well to work to meet the needs of themselves and their children, and take care of their children when they came home from work. Environment Mastery of the three participants was good, the three participants were able to regulate and control their environment so that it was good and comfortable for their psychic and physical. The three participants know their life goals clearly and are always moving to be able to achieve the life goals they set for their lives in the future and the three participants are able to develop themselves according to their potential.

### *Suggestion*

Single mother adolescents are expected to continue to maintain and improve the quality of life in a more positive direction as a means of achieving psychological well-being and achieving a better quality of life, in this case, the quality of relationships with children, parents, and the environment.

For parents to be able to provide support to adolescents, especially at the beginning of pregnancy and when they become single mothers because young single mothers need a lot of positive support that can help teenagers achieve psychological well-being.

For Reader, this study does not intend to show that being a single mother when you're a teenager will going to be easy and not hard to live in it. but if that happens then show your support for them.

For further researchers, it is necessary to dig deeper into the psychological well-being of single mother adolescents and to examine more research references regarding the psychological well-being of single mother adolescents.

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