

Children's Psychological Well-Being from the Perspective of Single Mothers: A Phenomenological Study on Economic Independence and Parenting

Nuzulunni'mah*, Trisna Sayekti Wijayanti

Fakultas Ushuluddin, Adab, dan Dakwah, Universitas Islam Negeri

Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, Indonesia

*Penulis korespondensi, Surel: nuzulunni'mah@uinsatu.ac.id

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the increasing number of single mothers in Indonesia who face dual roles as caregivers and breadwinners, which may affect their children's psychological well-being. The study aims to explore how single mothers understand and fulfill their children's psychological well-being through economic independence and parenting practices. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with six single mothers who run businesses and have school-age children. The findings indicate that mothers define psychological well-being as children feeling happy, safe, and having their needs fulfilled. To achieve economic independence, mothers manage home-based businesses that allow them to remain present for their children. Parenting practices emphasize discipline, affection, open communication, and responsibility. Based on Ryff's dimensions of psychological well-being, children demonstrate positive development in self-acceptance, social relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. These outcomes are shaped by the mothers' resilience and additional support systems.

Keywords: child psychological well-being; economic independence; parenting; single parent

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh tingginya jumlah ibu *single parent* di Indonesia yang menghadapi tantangan ganda dalam memenuhi kemandirian ekonomi sekaligus memastikan kesejahteraan psikologis anak. Kondisi tersebut menuntut ibu untuk menjalankan peran pengasuhan dan pencari nafkah secara bersamaan, sehingga berpotensi memengaruhi perkembangan emosional, sosial, serta keberfungsian psikologis anak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami secara mendalam bagaimana ibu *single parent* memaknai dan memenuhi kesejahteraan psikologis anak melalui kemandirian ekonomi serta pola pengasuhan yang mereka jalankan. Menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap enam ibu *single parent* yang memiliki usaha UMKM dan anak usia sekolah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesejahteraan psikologis anak dimaknai ibu sebagai kondisi ketika anak merasa bahagia, aman, dan tercukupi kebutuhannya. Para ibu berupaya mencapai kemandirian ekonomi melalui usaha rumahan yang memungkinkan mereka tetap mendampingi anak, sementara pengasuhan dilakukan dengan penekanan pada disiplin, kasih sayang, komunikasi terbuka, serta penanaman nilai tanggung jawab. Analisis berdasarkan aspek-aspek *psychological well being* Ryff mengungkapkan bahwa anak menunjukkan perkembangan positif dalam penerimaan diri, hubungan sosial, kemandirian, penguasaan lingkungan, tujuan hidup dan pertumbuhan pribadi, yang terbentuk melalui

kombinasi antara ketangguhan ibu, dukungan sosial, serta adaptasi keluarga terhadap perubahan peran.

Kata kunci: kesejahteraan psikologis anak; kemandirian ekonomi; pengasuhan ibu single parent

1. Introduction

Changes in family structure in Indonesia have continued to increase over the past decade and have had a direct impact on parenting patterns and children's psychological well-being. Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that more than 12.72% of households in Indonesia are headed by women, mostly due to divorce or the death of a spouse (Komnas Perempuan, 2023). This trend is in line with global reports that children living in single-parent families face greater challenges in adaptation, especially in terms of emotional stability and social relationships (UNICEF, 2021). This phenomenon shows that changes in family structure are not merely a shift in domestic role, but also conditions that have the potential to affect the psychological well-being of children during their sensitive developmental period.

Children's psychological well-being is an important issue because it is related to their ability to manage emotions, build positive relationships, and adapt to environmental demands (Ryff, 1989). Children's psychological well being in this study is defined as a condition of optimal psychological functioning in school-age children (6-12 years), encompassing six dimension; self acceptance, positive relation with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989), which have been adapted to the child's developmental stage.

Single parent situations often place children in significant transitional circumstances, requiring consistent emotional support from their primary caregiver. A study by Lee & McLanahan (2015) shows that children who experience changes in family structure are more prone to anxiety, decreased academic motivation, and relational conflicts, especially when parenting is unstable. However, other research notes that secure attachment between children and mothers can minimize these risks and support healthy psychological development (Simanjuntak & Rinaldi, 2024). Thus, children's well-being depends not only on family status but also on the quality of relationships and parenting patterns.

In the Indonesian context, single mothers bear a heavier burden than two-parent families, as they must fulfill both parenting and economic roles. Research by Novitasari & Lestari (2020) found that single mothers often face economic pressures, emotional burdens, and a lack of social support, all of which have the potential to affect their children's psychological stability. However, various studies also show that mothers are able to develop

adaptive coping strategies, such as improving communication with their children, reorganizing domestic roles, and making independent efforts to increase family income (Health et al., 2023). These strategies play an important role in creating a safe emotional environment for children. However, most studies focus more on the well-being of mothers, while mothers' perceptions of their children's psychological well-being have not been discussed in depth.

In this study, a single mother refers to a mother who independently raises and cares for her children due to divorce or the death of a spouse. Beyond serving as the primary caregiver, single mothers simultaneously assume the role of breadwinner, making them responsible for both the economic sustainability of the family and the psychological development of their children (Bani et al., 2021; Santrock, 2002). These dual responsibilities require continuous adaptation in balancing caregiving practices with economic demands. To manage these multiple responsibilities, single mothers employ various coping strategies. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1987), coping refers to cognitive and behavioral efforts used to manage stressful internal and external demands. In single-parent families, problem-focused coping includes managing household finances, developing businesses, and reorganizing family routines, whereas emotion-focused coping enables mothers to regulate their emotions and provide a secure emotional environment for their children.

Children's psychological well-being in this study is grounded in Ryff's multidimensional model of psychological well-being. The model includes self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). Although originally developed for adults, these dimensions can be adapted to children's developmental contexts and are reflected in children's emotional regulation, social adjustment, independence, and capacity to develop meaningful future aspirations. Children's psychological well-being is also influenced by social environments, cultural contexts, and economic conditions that support optimal psychological functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Bowlby (1969) further explains that the first emotional relationship between a child and their primary caregiver forms an attachment pattern that influences emotional regulation and the ability to build relationships in the future. Children who feel closeness, responsiveness, and consistent presence from their caregivers tend to develop secure attachment, which is a sense of security that forms the basis for social and emotional development. This attachment pattern is particularly relevant in single-parent families, where the intensity of the relationship between the child and mother increases due to changes in family roles.

From the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1970), places basic needs and a sense of security as the foundation that must be fulfilled before children can develop advanced psychological potential. In the context of single-parent families, fulfilling physiological and emotional security aspects are important elements because changes in family structure can trigger uncertainty for children. These needs are closely related to economic stability, parenting patterns, and the availability of social support provided by the mother as the primary caregiver.

Parenting also plays a central role in shaping children's psychological well-being. Baumrind (1971) proposed three parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, and democratic. Democratic parenting, characterized by warmth, open communication, and clear boundaries, is considered most supportive of children's psychological development. In single-parent families, this parenting style plays a key role because it balances children's need for structure and emotional closeness. Responsive parenting helps children develop independence, emotional regulation, and the ability to build healthy relationships.

Beyond parenting practices, the family continues to perform affective, economic, socialization, and protective functions (Fredrickson et al., 2001). All of these functions are interrelated in forming a stable parenting environment. In single-parent families, these functions often undergo adjustments because one parent bears all the responsibilities. These adjustments then affect the quality of emotional and social support received by the child, which ultimately influences their psychological well-being.

Previous studies on single mothers have primarily examined parenting roles (Bani et al., 2021), meaning in life following divorce or widowhood (Cholilah & Nurmaidah, 2022), livelihood strategies (Susanti & Hayat, 2022), and women's economic independence (Sujarot, 2024). Although these studies provide valuable insights into the economic and psychological challenges experienced by single mothers, they have not comprehensively explored how mothers' economic independence and parenting practices jointly contribute to children's psychological well-being from the mothers' lived experiences. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by integrating economic independence and parenting practices within a phenomenological framework to understand children's psychological well-being from the perspective of single mothers.

State-of-the-art research shows that studies on single-parent families in Indonesia still focus on parenting stress, family dysfunction, or economic impacts (Bani et al., 2021; Putu et al., 2015). Research on the psychological well-being of children living in single-parent families is still limited, especially those using the perspective of mothers as primary caregivers. Furthermore, the integration of Ryff's psychological well-being theory with

Bowlby's attachment theory, Lazarus and Folkman's coping theory, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs in the context of children is rarely done. In fact, this kind of multidimensional approach is important to provide a comprehensive picture of how children's psychological well-being is formed and understood in incomplete family situations.

The research problem of this study is formulated as follows: how do single-parent mothers experience and interpret, as well as fulfill, their children's psychological well-being through economic independence and parenting practices. Fulfill it. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of mothers phenomenologically in understanding their children's psychological conditions, identify the factors they consider important for maintaining their children's well-being, and describe the adaptation process undertaken by mothers in carrying out their parenting roles. This study is expected to contribute theoretically by strengthening the understanding of children's psychological well-being in the context of single-parent families, as well as contributing practically to the development of family support programs and community-based interventions to support children's well-being.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology seeks to explore participants' subjective experiences of a phenomenon through in-depth interviews and observations to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon from their perspectives (Creswell, 2014). More specifically, this study was grounded in descriptive phenomenology, which aims to understand and describe the essence of participants' lived experiences as consciously experienced and interpreted by individuals (Kahija, 2017).

This study uses purposive sampling techniques to determine relevant samples. This technique involves selecting participants based on certain criteria predetermined by the researcher. The criteria determined by the researcher are: single mothers, either divorced or widowed, with children living with them, who have owned a micro, small, or medium enterprise for more than 5 years. The selected informant criteria are intended to indicate economic stability and sustainability, suggesting that the informants have passed the initial phase of business uncertainty. Furthermore, this duration enables them to have sufficient experience to deeply reflect on their dual roles as breadwinners and caregivers in relation to their children's psychological well-being.

Data collection in this study was conducted through in-depth interviews with 6 participants. The researcher visited the participants' homes to request their willingness to participate in the data collection. The interview questions were compiled with reference to psychological well-being according to Ryff & Keyes (1995), economic independence from Siti

Djazimah (in Safiudin, 2021), and parenting from Baumrind (1991). The data analysis technique used in this study is the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method, which involves data collection through interviews, data transcription by producing verbatim records, coding, theme development, in-depth interpretation, researcher reflexivity and engagement, and validation of the findings. Data validity was ensured through member checking using the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) technique, in which all informants were gathered to revalidate the data they had previously provided to the researcher.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Result

In this study, there were six main informants, namely YA (46 years old), NN (38 years old), ES (53 years old), MR (52 years old), IR (45 years old) and SM (49 years old). Based on the results of in-depth interviews with participants, it was found that the understanding of single parents in interpreting and fulfilling the psychological well-being of children is a complex and long journey. The experiences of the participants showed that to interpret and fulfill the psychological well-being of children can not only be done with proper parenting from the mother's internal side but also requires external factors that can fulfill the psychological well-being of children, one of which is economic independence.

3.2 Mother's Interpretation of Children's Psychology Well'Being

Based on the interview results, mothers' interpretations of children's psychological well-being vary. Informant YA stated that psychological well-being is not merely about happiness, but also about the child's ability to process and accept the condition of living without a father, as reflected in the statement, "initially the second child was sad... but with encouragement from the older sibling, the child became motivated again (YA/P01)." In addition, the child is able to build positive social relationships, as shown in "now many friends come to the house... and interactions with neighbors have become normal (YA/P01)." The child's independence is reflected in "they are able to manage their own needs... and are used to helping with household chores without being asked (YA/P01)," as well as their ability to adapt and show empathy toward family conditions, as seen in "they often help... 'I'll play later, Mom, after you're done (YA/P01)." The children also demonstrate clear life goals, such as "the older sibling wants to succeed so their mother does not have to work hard... the younger wants to become a doctor (YA/P01)," and show positive personal growth, as reflected in "the children remain motivated to study... so they can succeed and make their mother happy (YA/P01)."

The interpretation of children's psychological well-being by informant NN reflects a condition in which children are able to accept their family situation, maintain positive social

relationships, develop independence, demonstrate empathy, possess life goals, and show increasing emotional maturity. Self-acceptance is reflected in the statement, “she has accepted it... ‘mom, don’t think about father anymore... I am already happy with you” (NN/P02), indicating the child’s ability to accept the absence of a father. Positive social relations are evident from “she has many friends... she can socialize easily without limiting herself” (NN/P02), while independence is shown in “she can prepare herself... and sometimes helps me (NN/P02)”. Environmental mastery is reflected in the child’s empathy, “I feel sorry if mom is alone at home... so I help (NN/P02)”. Life purpose begins to emerge as seen in “she wants to become a fish farm owner... and make her mother happy” (NN/P02), and personal growth is indicated by emotional concern, “mom, don’t be too tired... I feel sad if you are sick” (NN/P02).

For informant ES, children’s psychological well-being is interpreted as the ability to realistically accept family conditions, adapt socially, develop independence, and demonstrate empathy and responsibility within the family. Self-acceptance is shown in “they seem to have accepted and become used to this condition” (ES/P03). Positive relationships develop through maternal guidance, as reflected in “she used to feel ashamed... but now she is able to socialize and has good relationships” (ES/P03). Independence is evident in “they can wash and iron their own clothes” (ES/P03). Environmental mastery is demonstrated through empathy, “I feel sad, but I am still happy because mom is here... we take our own roles” (ES/P03). Life purpose is reflected in aspirations such as “wanting to open a photography studio... and becoming a Qur’an memorizer” (ES/P03), while personal growth is indicated by behavioral improvement, “they can control their emotions... and no longer burden each other” (ES/P03).

The interpretation of psychological well-being by informant MR emphasizes a transformative process from loss to positive development. Self-acceptance is reflected in the child’s change, “she used to be withdrawn... now she is more cheerful... ‘father would be happy to see us happy” (MR/P04). Positive social relationships are rebuilt through adaptation, “eventually she played with friends again... now she has many friends” (MR/P04). Independence is described as a dynamic process, “after the father’s death... she gradually became independent again” (MR/P04). Environmental mastery is evident through active involvement, “she makes crafts... helps sell products... and enjoys earning her own money” (MR/P04). Life purpose is reflected in aspirations, “she wants to become a content creator and own an accessories shop” (MR/P04), while personal growth is demonstrated through increased achievement and engagement, “she is more motivated to study and actively participates in competitions” (MR/P04).

For informant IR, children's psychological well-being is interpreted as the ability to accept family conditions with social support, accompanied by obedience, simplicity, and a tendency not to burden the parent. Self-acceptance is reflected in "now it feels normal... many people support us and help us recover" (IR/05). Although the child is relatively quiet, social relationships remain adaptive, as shown in "she is quiet... but has many friends at the boarding school" (IR/05). Independence develops within the boarding school context, "she became independent at the boarding school" (IR/05). Environmental mastery is reflected in the child's attitude, "she is obedient... does not cause trouble... and does things on her own if she can" (IR/05), indicating self-regulation and adaptation to the environment.

The interpretation of children's psychological well-being by informant SM reflects a complex adaptive process within an extended family context, emphasizing social support, responsibility, and family solidarity. Self-acceptance is evident in the prolonged adjustment process, "the second child took longer... but has now accepted the situation and feels the need to be strong for the younger siblings" (SM/P06). Social relationships vary but continue to develop, as seen in "the others are fine... sociable... and the struggling child has gradually adapted" (SM/P06). Independence is reflected in role distribution within the family, "each child understands their responsibilities... the eldest works, others help at home" (SM/P06). Environmental mastery is demonstrated through open communication, "nothing is hidden... everyone supports each other" (SM/P06). Life purpose is oriented toward family well-being, "they want to make their mother happy" (SM/P06), while personal growth is reflected in resilience and mutual support, "they strengthen and support one another... the eldest takes on a fatherly role" (SM/P06).

3.2.1 Strategies for Fulfilling Children's Psychological Well-Being: Economic Independence and Parenting

The strategies employed by single mothers in this study to ensure their children's psychological well-being are economic independence and parenting practices. For single mothers, economic independence is a long and arduous process that not only focuses on meeting basic needs but also influences children's psychological well-being. Economic independence also serves as evidence of a mother's resilience in adapting to changing roles following the loss of a partner.

Economic independence for Participant One (YA) is understood as a gradual and arduous process leading to stability, which not only results in economic improvement but also provides a sense of security for the child. This is evident from the unstable early experiences "At first, it was all over the place...couldn't focus, both body and mind were

exhausted,” until finally deciding to focus on a business, “I had to have a solid business and be able to focus so it could grow...decided to open a coffee shop...added various pastries and cooked vegetables,” which then began to show results, “finances are stable, alhamdulillah, the struggles of the past are starting to pay off”. This process demonstrates that economic independence allows mothers to continue supporting their children at home while simultaneously creating a sense of security and well-being for the family.

For participant two (NN), economic independence is seen as a process fraught with challenges and dilemmas between economic demands and parenting responsibilities, yet it can be achieved through perseverance and patience. This is evident from the experience of a mother who found it difficult to work outside the home because she had to worry about her child “Working for someone else isn’t peaceful either; I’m constantly worried about my child because they’re still young,” so she chose to start a business from home “In the end, I just ran the business from home... I kept being patient and persevering so that my products would sell,” until she finally reached a more stable situation “Now, alhamdulillah, the economy is stable.” This process demonstrates that economic independence allows mothers to continue fulfilling their caregiving roles while also meeting the family’s needs.

Economic independence among the three participants (ES) is understood as a struggle that is not only focused on meeting financial needs, but also as a form of resilience and the formation of identity as independent mothers. This is evident from the economic pressures they feel, “everything requires money... it’s tough, sis; I’m almost stressed out because of this economic situation,” as well as the dynamic journey of their businesses, “falling many times, switching businesses one after another,” until finally achieving stability, “it’s only been stable in the last two years.” Despite facing psychological pressures, the motivation for their children’s future serves as the primary driving force, as expressed “The children give me strength... they still have a long road ahead to achieve success,” which encourages the mothers to keep persevering and growing.

Economic independence for Participant Four (MR) is understood as a process of discovering one’s potential, supported by the courage to focus on a field of interest and reinforced by social support and training. This is evident from her initial doubts “At first, I wasn’t sure... this craft could generate income,” which then evolved through environmental support, “many people encouraged me; after joining the training, my perspective changed,” until finally choosing to focus on a single business, “I’m only focusing on this craft... focusing on marketing and finding distributors,”. This process demonstrates that economic independence is not only about meeting basic needs but also about developing one’s potential and having the courage to seize opportunities.

Economic independence for Participant Five (IR) is understood as a process of recovery triggered by economic pressures and reinforced by emotional support from her child, which in turn fostered resilience and self-empowerment. This is evident from the initial condition following the loss of a spouse “I had to manage everything on my own... my child once said they wanted to help me work so I wouldn’t be stressed,” which became a source of strength to rise up “I felt there was a force pushing me to rise up and manage everything.” This demonstrates that economic independence is not merely material in nature but also the result of a resilience process and an intrinsic drive to ensure the child’s well-being.

Economic independence among the six participants (SM) is understood as a long process of moving from a state of crisis toward stability, involving significant sacrifice, resilience, and family support. This is evident from the heavy economic pressure, “having four children... so many needs... to the point of feeling stressed and overwhelmed,” as well as extreme decisions to survive, “selling assets... even the house was sold, and we moved in with my parents,” accompanied by repeated business failures, “starting new businesses that failed time and again.” This process demonstrates that economic independence reflects not only financial capability but also psychological strength, family resilience, and emotional collaboration in the face of adversity.

The second strategy employed by single mothers is parenting. Parenting refers to the way parents accompany, care for, educate, and meet all their children’s needs; furthermore, it is a form of the single mother’s struggle to safeguard her child’s psychological well-being. Parenting also serves as a space where mothers and children learn to understand and adapt to one another, while building a warm and meaningful relationship.

The parenting style of Participant One (YA) is characterized by the practice of democratic parenting, which balances discipline and warmth in communication. This is evident in the mother’s efforts to foster open communication “the children often don’t initiate conversations, so we end up paying attention to each other” while simultaneously instilling a sense of responsibility through clear rules “discipline is mandatory... prayer comes first... come home on time.” This style demonstrates that warm communication serves as a means to build emotional closeness while fostering responsibility in the child.

The parenting style of Participant Two (NN) is interpreted as a form of democratic parenting that balances emotional closeness with the enforcement of discipline. This is evident in the mother’s efforts to show affection through her presence and time spent with the child “setting aside plenty of time for the child is a form of love,” while still enforcing structured rules “Rules and time discipline are important... playtime, school, meals, and religious study are all scheduled.” This pattern indicates that a balance between emotional

warmth and discipline is a key strategy in fostering the child's sense of responsibility and psychological well-being.

The parenting style of (ES) tends toward permissive parenting, characterized by a more relaxed and, gentle approach without much pressure. This is evident in the statement, "Reasonable rules, not too restrictive... what's important is that they take responsibility," which indicates minimal control while still emphasizing the value of responsibility. Although it tends to be permissive, this style remains focused on fostering responsibility and cooperation as a strategy for safeguarding the child's psychological well-being.

The parenting style of Participant Four (MR) reflects a democratic approach that emphasizes a balance between emotional warmth and flexible boundaries. This is evident in the mother's efforts to be a reliable figure without making the child dependent "I have to be someone the child can rely on, but the child shouldn't become spoiled." The mother also demonstrates strong empathy and emotional support through open communication "Listening to his stories actually helps heal him... we often chat before bedtime." This parenting style indicates that warm communication, trust, and a dialogic approach are key strategies in supporting the child's psychological well-being.

The parenting style of Participant Five (IR) tends toward permissive parenting, characterized by a low level of control and a lack of deep emotional communication. This is evident from the statement, "I don't communicate much with my child... as long as he's okay, I consider it fine," as well as the low enforcement of rules: "I rarely set rules... because the child is obedient." This pattern indicates that although the mother provides freedom and meets the child's needs, emotional closeness has not been optimally established due to limitations in affective communication.

The parenting style of Participant Six (SM) reflects a democratic approach that emphasizes open communication, cooperation, and children's involvement in decision-making. This is evident in the mother's efforts to foster openness within the family "We're united in being open with each other and talking things through..." Furthermore, rules and controls are not imposed unilaterally but are established through mutual agreement "We create those rules and controls together...". This parenting style demonstrates that open communication and child involvement are key strategies in fostering responsibility, harmony, and the child's psychological well-being.

3.2.2 Supporting and Hindering factors: Implications for Single-Parent Family Resilience

Based on the interviews conducted, there are several supporting and hindering factors that influence single mothers in meeting their children's psychological well-being needs. The primary supportive factors stem from the support of the extended family and

the social environment, which help mothers cope with life's pressures. This is evident in the statement, "Many of my husband's relatives also helped... many of them supported me and my child" (IR/P05), indicating that social support accelerates the family's recovery and adaptation process. Additionally, the success of UMKM businesses plays a crucial role in creating economic stability, as expressed in the statements, "Alhamdulillah, our economic situation is now stable" (NN/P02) and "Our finances are stable, and the business is doing well... our efforts are starting to pay off" (YA/P01). This stability not only ensures the fulfillment of basic needs but also provides a sense of security for the children. Another supporting factor is children's positive response to emotional closeness with their mothers, such as "the children often don't initiate conversations, but eventually we start paying attention to each other" (YA/P01) and "Mom, don't tire yourself out... I'm sad" (NN/P02), which indicate a strong, mutually reinforcing emotional bond between mother and child.

In addition, there are several barriers that mothers face in ensuring their children's psychological well-being. Economic constraints and the heavy burden of dual roles are the main challenges, as seen in the experiences of mothers who have to struggle financially "At first, I was still doing odd jobs... my body and mind were exhausted" (YA/P01) and "I have four children... so many needs... it's like I'm stressed out" (SM/P06). These conditions often lead to physical and emotional exhaustion, even triggering stress, as expressed "I'm almost stressed out because of this financial situation" (ES/P03). Additionally, anxiety about the children's future and financial uncertainty pose significant challenges, reflected in the mothers' persistent efforts despite facing repeated failures "I've fallen many times, trying different ventures one after another" (ES/P03). Thus, ensuring the psychological well-being of children in single-parent families is a process influenced by the interaction between supporting and hindering factors, which demands resilience, adaptation, and strong social support from the mother and her surrounding environment.

3.3 Discussion

The discussion in this study integrates empirical findings regarding the experiences of single mothers in understanding and fulfilling their children's psychological well-being with the theoretical framework described in the section. Through a phenomenological approach and thematic analysis, this study found that children's psychological well-being is perceived by mothers not only as a stable emotional condition, but also as the child's ability to form positive relationships, demonstrate adaptation to changes in family structure, and maintain psychological comfort in daily life. This perspective reflects how mothers interpret their children's well-being through observation of their behavior, emotional expressions, and responses to family dynamics after the loss of a partner.

The interpretation of these findings was conducted by combining Ryff's dimensions of psychological well-being, Lazarus and Folkman's dynamics of coping, Bowlby's concept of attachment, Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs, and Baumrind's parenting styles. This combination of theories allows for a discussion that not only explains the phenomena that emerged from the interview data, but also unravels the reasons why these conditions occur in the context of single-parent families. Thus, the discussion is structured as an analysis that places the mothers' experiences in a broader framework, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the psychological, social, and relational mechanisms that play a role in maintaining children's psychological well-being.

3.3.1 Single mothers' Interpretation of Children's Psychological Well-Being

The results of the study show that single mothers interpret their children's psychological well-being through emotional indicators such as cheerfulness, discipline, openness, and a sense of security that they observe in their daily behavior. These findings are in line with Ryff's (1989) theory of psychological well-being, which places emotional relationships and affective stability as important parts of well-being. Psychological well-being encompasses relational aspects, emotional regulation, and adaptive abilities. Why do mothers place more emphasis on emotional aspects? The data show that all participants underwent a difficult family transition, so mothers focused their attention on maintaining their children's emotional stability after the loss of their father figure. Thus, the mother's orientation towards emotional signs is an adaptive response to a family situation experiencing uncertainty. This approach is also supported by Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, which explains that children who experience changes in family structure are in great need of consistent emotional presence from their primary caregiver. From the perspective of single mothers, their attention to their children's emotional aspects increases because changes in family structure often cause anxiety or feelings of loss in children.

In addition to emotional aspects, mothers also assess their children's well-being based on their involvement in household activities and their ability to communicate. Children are considered to be in good psychological condition when they are able to talk about their experiences, needs, or feelings. This pattern shows that mothers associate their children's well-being with social skills and self-management skills, which are part of the dimensions of positive relationships and autonomy in Ryff's theory. In other words, mothers understand that their children's emotional stability is not only evident in "calm" behavior, but also in their openness and closeness to their parents.

3.3.2 Strategies for Fulfilling Children's Psychological Well-Being: Economic Independence and Parenting

Single mothers in this study developed two main adaptive strategies, namely economic independence and strengthening parenting patterns. The efforts to build independent businesses (MSMEs) undertaken by all participants were a form of problem-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987) to respond to financial pressures after the loss of their partner's support. Why are these economic strategies important for children's well-being? Data show that when basic family needs are met, mothers can provide more stable emotional support. This is consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1970), in which the fulfilment of physiological needs and a sense of security form the foundation for psychological development.

Beyond economic adaptation, mothers also reorganize their parenting patterns to be warmer and more communicative, in line with Baumrind's (1971) democratic parenting style. Mothers choose to work from home not only because of limited job opportunities, but also so they can remain present for their children. This explains why positive relationships with children continue to form even when families experience economic pressure; mothers consciously integrate economic strategies with their children's psychological needs.

3.3.3 Parenting Dynamics and Their Impact on Children's Psychological Well-Being

When analyzed using Ryff's dimensions, each piece of data obtained can be explained theoretically. For example, children's self-acceptance develops because of the open communication patterns established by their mothers (Ryff, 1989). Positive relationships are formed because of responsive parenting and consistent maternal presence (Bowlby, 1969). Children's independence increases because they are given space to play a role in household routines (Baumrind, 1971). Mastery of the environment can be seen in children's ability to adapt to new environments or changing situations (Ryff, 1989). Life goals and personal growth develop because of the emotional stability created by mothers through safe routines and supportive parenting patterns (Santrock, 2002). Why does this dynamic emerge? Because all participants face the pressure of dual roles, they actively reorganize the family environment to maintain the child's psychological stability. These findings are in line with the research by Bani et al. (2021), which states that single mothers develop supportive parenting patterns as a form of family resilience.

3.3.4 Supporting and Hindering factors: Implications for Single-Parent Family Resilience

Supporting factors such as extended family support, social environment, and the success of MSME businesses provide space for mothers to focus on their children's psychological needs. Conversely, obstacles such as economic limitations and emotional

exhaustion suppress mothers' ability to maintain the quality of their parenting. Why do children remain psychologically stable despite these strong obstacles? Data shows that the emotional presence of mothers is the main compensating factor. Thus, even with limited material resources, mothers' emotional regulation contributes significantly to children's well-being. These findings support the concept of family resilience, which emphasizes that the quality of family relationships can protect children psychologically in high-stress situations (Bani et al., 2021).

Overall, the findings of this study show that the psychological well-being of children in single-parent families cannot be separated from the dynamics of adaptation experienced by mothers as primary caregivers. The process of mothers observing their children's emotional conditions, the closeness of family relationships, and the strategies used to maintain household stability form a comprehensive understanding of how children's psychological well-being is maintained. These results form the basis for further discussion linking empirical findings with theoretical frameworks to explain the mechanisms underlying children's psychological well-being in the context of single-parent families.

4. Conclusion

The research findings indicate that single mothers' experience in understanding their children's psychological well-being is a complex and dynamic process, interpreted not only as a state of happiness but also as the child's ability to adapt, be independent, form social relationships, and have a sense of purpose and personal growth. In maintaining their children's psychological well-being, mothers identified several key factors: social support from family and the community, economic stability through small and medium-sized enterprises, and emotional closeness between mother and child. Additionally, mothers face various challenges, such as economic constraints, the burden of dual roles, physical and emotional exhaustion, and anxiety about their children's future. The adaptation process undertaken by mothers includes efforts to achieve economic independence and the application of diverse parenting styles, such as democratic and permissive parenting, tailored to the child's conditions and needs.

The conclusion of this study emphasizes that the psychological well-being of children in single-parent families is not only determined by the child's internal factors but is also significantly influenced by the mother's ability to adapt economically and in her parenting. Economic independence and responsive parenting styles are key strategies in creating an environment that supports the child's psychological development. Therefore, the mother's success in managing her dual roles, along with support from the social environment, is crucial in maintaining the child's.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results. First, the number of participants was only six single mothers from one subdistrict, so the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of single mothers with different social, cultural, and economic conditions. The family situation, parenting patterns, and emotional experiences of each participant were influenced by their individual life dynamics, so the results of the study describe the depth of individual experiences rather than variations in the phenomenon on a broader scale. Second, the data were collected through in-depth interviews, so the interpretation was highly dependent on the participants' ability to remember, narrate their experiences, and express the psychological condition of their children. It is possible that certain aspects were not explored optimally due to time constraints during the interviews or the sensitivity of topics related to family conditions after the loss of a spouse. Third, this study focuses on the perspective of mothers as primary caregivers, so it does not include the children's direct views. This means that assessments of children's psychological well-being are still interpretive based on the mothers' perceptions, rather than the result of triangulation with other data sources such as observations of children's behavior or interviews with school officials.

Nevertheless, these limitations do not diminish the value of this study in providing an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms used by single mothers in reading, responding to, and fulfilling their children's psychological needs. The findings still make an important contribution to the development of studies on the psychological well-being of children in the context of non-intact families and can serve as a basis for further, more extensive and comprehensive research.

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