

# The Effect of Social Support on Single Mothers' Subjective Well-Being and Its Implication for Counseling

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## Abstract

The present study aimed to discover the effect of social support on single mothers' subjective well-being. This study employed a correlational approach. One hundred fifty nine single-mothers in Bantul regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia were involved in this study, determined using quota sampling. The data were collected using social support and subjective well-being scales. Simple linear regression was used to analyze the data. The present study exhibited that social support significantly affects single mothers' subjective well-being. This study can be used as a reference proving that social support is much needed by a single-mother to obtain subjective well-being. Therefore, a service in the form of a psychoeducational group is required in the community to enhance social support on single-mother. It can also be in the form of psychoeducational group and counseling services for single-mother to enhance her subjective well-being. The present study aimed to discover the effect of social support on single mothers' subjective well-being. This study employed a correlational approach. One hundred fifty nine single-mothers in Bantul regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia were involved in this study, determined using quota sampling. The data were collected using social support and subjective well-being scales. Simple linear regression was used to analyze the data. The present study exhibited that social support significantly affects single mothers' subjective well-being. This study can be used as a



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**Keywords:** social support; subjective well-being; single mother

## **INTRODUCTION**

Happiness is everyone's goal, and everyone attempts to reach it. An individual is happy when they gain what they want, and is sad when they face obstacles or fails to gain what they want. This makes some individuals are discontented with their life. Happiness can be equivalent to subjective well-being (Diener & Chan, 2011; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Kaveeva, Ishkineeva, Ozerova, & Ahmetova, 2019; Neira, Lacalle-Calderon, Portela, & Perez-Trujillo, 2019). According to society, a good life is characterized by happiness, health, and long life (Diener & Chan, 2011). Subjective well-being refers to others' judgment on life satisfaction, evaluation of feelings, including the state of mind and emotion. An individual with a high level of subjective well-being can control their emotion and cope with various phenomena in their life, whereas those with a low level of subjective well-being view their life worthless, and they view the problems they face as heart-rending properly. Accordingly, an individual with a low subjective well-being often experiences negative emotion such as restlessness, depression (Rottenberg, Devendorf, Panaite, Disabato, & Kashdan, 2019; Wood & Joseph, 2010; Yüksel & Bahadir-Yilmaz, 2019), and anger (Haase, Seider, Shiota, & Levenson, 2012; Phillips, Henry, Hosie, & Milne, 2006; Weathersby, King, Fox, Loret, & Anderson, 2019).

Following the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), the growth of Indonesia's happiness index, based on marital status, is divided into four dimensions (BPS, 2017). The highest index emerged from an unmarried citizen (71.53%), and the lowest index emerged from the widowed and not remarried citizen (67.83%). For the affective dimension, the highest index comes from those who are married (69.05%), and the lowest index was found in divorced citizens (64.19%). For the life satisfaction dimension, the highest index was found in married citizens (71.38%), and the lowest ones emerged from a divorced citizen (68.14%). Regarding the dimension of life meaning, unmarried posed the highest index (74.93%) while the widowed citizen posed the lowest index (68.83%). This finding proves that divorced and widowed citizens possess a lower level of subjective well-being than unmarried and married citizens to do.

The increasing numbers of divorce result in more single-parent in countries around the world, including Indonesia. This phenomenon affects the vast role of a single parent in educating and raising a child. 12.34% of women are a widow, and 3.4% of men are widower, showing that there is more widow than widower (BPS, 2017). Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics noted that 18.84% of Indonesian women choose not to become a single mother. Single mother refers to a woman left by her spouse due to divorce or lost her spouses and not remarried, who prefers to raise her child alone (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2008). However, a single mother also wants to be like other families, i.e., having hope to reach life well-being and happiness. Such hope is challenging to realize, and often contains obstacles leading to failure. Problems inhibiting a single mother from reaching subjective well-being are diverse, such as social (Crosier, Butterworth, & Rodgers, 2007; Smoleva, 2017), economic (Crosier et al., 2007; Smoleva, 2017), psychological (Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, Widaman, & Cutrona, 2010), and health factors (Scharte & Bolte, 2013).

For a single mother, social support is the primary need to enhance self-confidence in solving their life. Social support is one of the factors affecting one's subjective well-being. Lack of social support is a problem that often faced by a single mother. Lack of social support can be seen by the lack of interaction with society and family. The broad and satisfactory social relationship is usually found in a happy individual. Otherwise, an unhappy individual is found to have a dissatisfactory social relationship (Diener & Seligman, 2002). Individuals need a supportive, positive, and complementing relation to maintain their happiness.

Previous studies show that social support affects subjective well-being in older adults, students, people in general, and Chinese college students (Goudarz, Foroughan, Makarem, & Rashedi, 2015; L. Tian, Zhao, & Huebner, 2015; Q. Tian, 2016). Based on the background of the problem and review of previous studies, the present study intends to discover the effect of social support on single mothers' subjective well-being in Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. This study can be used as a reference proving that social support is much needed by a single mother to obtain subjective well-being. Therefore, a service in the form of a psychoeducational group is required in the community to enhance social support on single mother. It can also be in the form of psychoeducational group and counseling services for single mother to enhance her subjective well-being.

## **METHOD**

This study employed correlational approach. Single mothers in Bantul regency were involved in this study, determined using quota sampling. The sample criteria in the study that has been carried out are women who have been single mothers for less than fifty years, have children at least one children, and willing to be the

subjects in the study. The subjects were categorized based on educational level, occupation, time of being single mother, numbers of children, and monthly income. Following the data, the majority of the subjects are graduated from junior high school or equivalent, work as unskilled labor, having 1-2 children, being a single mother for 0–5 years on average, and having an average income of IDR 300.000 - IDR 500.000. The subject was selected according to Krejcie and Morgan Table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Out of population of 277 single mothers, 159 of them were selected to participate in this study. The data were collected using social support and subjective well-being scales. The social support scale consists of 19 items with a validity coefficient  $> .3$  and an alpha coefficient of  $.876$ . The subjective well-being scale consists of 38 items with a validity coefficient  $> .3$  and an alpha coefficient of  $.863$ . Simple linear regression analysis was used to analyze the data.

## **RESULTS**

Before a simple linear regression analysis is performed, it is necessary to do a classic assumption test, which includes a normality test and a linearity test. The classic assumption test results can be seen in Table 1. (normality test) and Table 2. (linearity test). Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the value of sig. (p) social support  $.219$  ( $p > .05$ ) and subjective well-being  $.777$  ( $p > .05$ ). This means that social support and subjective well-being are normally distributed. Based on Table 2., it can be seen the calculated F value in the linearity test between social support - subjective well-being of  $.929$  with sig. (p) in the amount of  $.595$  ( $p > .05$ ). The linearity test results can be interpreted that there is a linear relationship between social support variables and subjective well-being. The data meet the requirements in the classical assumption test, so that it can be further analyzed using simple linear regression.

The collected data were analyzed using simple linear regression, aiming at finding out the effect of social support on the subject's subjective well-being. Table 3. and Table 4. show the result of the regression analysis. Table 3. shows that at a 5% level of significance, the F count value is  $172.157$ , and the significance value of  $.000$  ( $< .05$ ). Based on the F value and significance value, it can be said that the variance of an independent variable can account for the dependent variable. Table 4 shows the DW value of  $1.937$ . This value is compared with the dL and dU values obtained from the Durbin-Watson table regarding the sample size of 159, independent variable 1, and a significance level of 5% to determine the existence of autocorrelation. Based on the Durbin-Watson table, the value of  $dL=1.720$ , and  $dU=1.746$ .

**Table 1: Normality Test Results**

No	Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	P
1	Social Support	1.119	.164
2	Subjective Well-Being	.660	.777

**Table 2: Linierity Test Results**

Variable	F	P
Social Support - Subjective Well-Being	.929	.595

**Table 3: Anova The Effect of Social Support on Single-Mother's Subjective Well-being**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	5362.821	1	5362.821	172.157	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	4890.663	157	31.151		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10253.484</b>	<b>158</b>			

*a. Dependent Variable: Y (Subjective Well-Being)*

*b. Predictors: (Constant), X (Social Support)*

**Table 4: Model Summary the Effect of Social Support on Single-Mother's Subjective Well-being**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.723 <sup>a</sup>	.523	.520	5.58128	1.937

*a. Predictors: (Constant), X (Social Support)*

*b. Dependent Variable: Y (Subjective Well-Being)*

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to discover the effect of social support on single mothers' subjective well-being. Statistical analysis using simple linear regression indicated that social support significantly affects the subject's subjective well-being. The hypothesis testing shows that the significant hypothesis was accepted; in other words, social support significantly affects single mothers' subjective well-being in Jetis subdistrict, Bantul, Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Social support contributes to the single mothers' subjective well-being by 52.3%, while the other 47.7% was affected by other factors.

High social support may affect single mothers' subjective well-being. Social support refers to comfort, attention, self-esteem, or help provided by an individual or a group for another individual (Sarafino & Smith, 2014). Social support as the provision of help, attention, and affection for an individual (Høybye et al., 2010), these are obtained from a warm social relation so that an individual may feel being loved and worth. Social support can be in the form of physical and emotional support. Social support can be provided by individuals such as family, child, husband, wife, close friend, neighbor, colleagues, and others.

This is in line with the result of the study stating that social support and acceptance significantly affect student's subjective well-being (Tian et al., 2015). A study found that social support positively affects Chinese college students' subjective well-being (Xi, Wang, & Jia, 2017). The result of the study conducted on older adults and old exhibits that social support holds a significant association with subjective well-being, meaning that high social support leads to better subjective well-being (Goudarz et al., 2015; Tian, 2016). Accordingly, social support is meaningful for a single mothers since it may enhance her subjective well-being and improve life hope.

Theoretically, social support is associated with subjective well-being due to various reasons. Social support may take a role as a supporter in coping with stress, contribute to the decrease of the adverse effect of psychological stress, and other stressful life phenomena (Pugliesi, 1989). A study found that family support stands the highest effect in determining stress level, and peer support highly contributes to affect psychological problem symptoms (Wang & Castañeda-Sound, 2008). Chao (2011) states that social support may help an individual in improving well-being since it is capable of reducing his/her stress level. Some related studies state that individuals with low social support are prone to unhealthy behavior like alcohol consumption, sleep disorder, and fatigue (Thorsteinsson & Brown, 2009).

Single mothers faces not only economic and health problems, but also social problems. In social life, a single mothers are often alienated due to the stigma attached to her. They are often considered a threat to other married women since they think that their husband may cheat her with a single mothers. Society does not trust single mothers to take a role in an organization. Mockery and insult subjected by single mothers make them isolated and find it challenging to develop themselves. These problems make single mothers unhappy, dissatisfied, and angry with their condition. Accordingly, they often blame themselves or others, feel restless, become pessimistic with their life, and sad.

The purpose of social support is to enhance well-being, existence, and provide help, support, assistance, and attention toward an individual (Tarigan, 2018). With social support, an individual knows that they are loved, cared, respected, and have the desired part of his environment. An individual is happy due to the support they gains from their family, friends, or community. Accordingly, it makes they feel more confident and meaningful. An individual becomes happy when they accepted by the community. Therefore,

social support is pivotal for single mother so that they can live her life happily.

The present study also indicates that an individual's well-being is affected by other factors besides social support. Although an individual is in an unstable condition, when they can adequately adapt to the environment, it can make them feel better. An individual with good adaptive skills can cope with life events better, eventually, it makes them possess better subjective well-being.

Subjective well-being is crucial to be studied because positive value and mental health help individuals identify what is missing from individual life. For a single mothers, psychological stress may result in various negative emotions and thought. Psychological stress is associated with anger and stress (Diong et al., 2005). Further, psychological stress also holds a positive correlation with physiological disease. Therefore, psychological stress does not only affect one's psychological health but also their physiological health. An individual with a low level of subjective well-being tend to feel unhappy, dissatisfaction, have low self-esteem, and possess a higher level of depression (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003). One's subjective well-being tends to make him needs less self-evaluation, which significantly affects their happiness and life satisfaction (Wilkinson, 2004).

Subjective well-being is a crucial indicator in studying an individual's psychological condition. By studying a single mothers' subjective well-being, a counselor can help single mother to do self-evaluation, understand her characteristics, and do many things to obtain subjective well-being. The present study assists counselors by providing a depiction that subjective well-being is affected by social supports, among others. Counselors may establish a good relationship and provide social support in a single mothers' environment. Counselors may collaborate with any related parties to build a pleasant climate of social support for single mothers.

Counselors can form a psychoeducational group in society. The psychoeducational group focuses on skill development to prevent problems (DeLucia-Waack, 2006). Through a psychoeducational group, a counselor could attempts to improve and forms social support in the form of physical, mind, or emotional for single mothers. Counselors can build an understanding of the members of the psychoeducational group that single mothers need social support to obtain better subjective well-being and life standard. Counselors also could explain adverse effects when a single mothers do not obtain social support. Psychoeducational groups employ group-based educational and developmental strategies, particularly role-playing, problem-solving, decision making, and communication skills training (DeLucia-Waack, 2006).

A psychoeducational group can also consist of a group of single mothers. In this group, counselors make preventive and developmental attempts to maintain single mothers subjective well-being. Those attempts can be in the form of developing single

mother's self-confidence, stress management skills, emotion management skills, interpersonal skills, and other attempts. This is in line with DeLucia-Waack (2006), who states that the psychoeducational group teaches specific skills and coping strategies to prevent problems. Such skills and strategies might include anger management, social skills, self-esteem, assertiveness, and making friends.

Besides, counselors can conduct counseling with single mothers as a curative attempt, either in individual or group settings. Counseling may help single mothers obtaining a new understanding of their life, leading to the achievement of subjective well-being. One of the types of counseling that suits for a single mother in reaching subjective well-being is family counseling. Family counseling refers to a process to encourage family growth, instill mental health, and excellent communication (Noor, 2014). Every family member holds the right to express their feeling regarding the problems they are facing. Therefore, single mothers who have lack family support need help from professional counselor to obtain subjective well-being. This professional help is in the form of family counseling, among others. Family counseling is effective in overcoming family problems compared to individual counseling.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present study exhibited that social support significantly affects single mothers' subjective well-being. This study can be used as a reference proving that social support is much needed by a single mothers to obtain subjective well-being. Therefore, a service in the form of a psychoeducational group is required in the community to enhance social support on single mothers. It can also be in the form of counseling services to enhance single mothers' subjective well-being.

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