
Parenting Stress in Single Mothers Caring for Children with Delayed Growth and Development

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Abstract:

This research aims to determine parenting stress in single mothers who are caring for children with delayed growth and development, this is because caring for children with delayed growth and development is not an easy thing, especially for single mothers, with all the limited abilities they have, it makes mothers vulnerable to experiencing parenting stress, which reviewed through aspects and factors of parenting stress. The method used in this research is a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Sampling in the research used a purposive sampling method with interview data collection techniques. Subick in the research consisted of four single mothers who were caring for children with growth and development delays. Research results Overall, it shows that the subjects experienced parenting stress. In the four subjects the parenting stress experienced was caused by the absence of support from the family or the environment during parenting, the subject's condition was that he had to work to meet the family's needs, as well as the condition of the child with delays in growth and development, making the child completely dependent on the mother, with all the limited abilities that mothers have, they are vulnerable to experiencing parenting stress.

Keywords: *Child development delays, Parenting stress, Single mother*

1. Introduction

The family, which consists of one person living in one location and providing for one another, is the smallest social group in society. Everything that occurs in life is out of our control. One of them is a partner's passing; for the partner who is left behind, this is an unexpected event (Sari, Ifdil & Yendi, 2019). More stress can result from a partner's death than from a divorce. This is due to the fact that divorced people still have the chance to mend the rift in their relationship with their ex-

partner and receive support for the needs of their kids. In the meanwhile, people who lose their spouse to death will experience excruciating anguish, require a lot of time to heal and come to terms with the loss, and have to learn to live with their new role as a single parent (Aprilia, 2013).

Carrying out the role as a single parent means experiencing significant changes in life, giving rise to many new problems that must be faced, especially for single mothers, such as economics and social problems and other household matters that must be resolved alone (Sari, Ifdil & Yendi, 2019). If at first they only played mother and father, now they have to play dual roles (Aprilia, 2013). Being a single parent, the mother also plays the role of a father, who earns a living to meet the family's needs, manages finances, and makes decisions within the family, as a mother who cares for, educates, and provides provisions for her children in the form of knowledge and experience so that they will grow up to become great children (Ramadhani & Rahmandani, 2019).

The burden felt by single mothers in the parenting process can result in stress, thus encouraging parents to take out this stress on their children by committing violence and even neglecting their children (Fitriani, Gina & Perdhana, 2021). In Indonesia, the Commission for the Protection of Children and Mothers (2020) succeeded in recording 5.066 cases of violence and neglect of children in 2014, and this number continues to increase to 6.519 cases in 2020. This shows that parenting stress can have an impact on the welfare of parents and children, especially on single parents (Koamesah, Ongkowidjojo, Alvianto, 2021).

Raising and educating a child alone is not easy, especially if the child has special needs (Ramadhani & Rahmandani, 2019). Children with special needs have obstacles and limitations in their growth and development. Children with special needs are categorized into several sections, including intellectual differences, ways of communicating, mental and behavioral disorders, sensory functions, physical conditions, and other disabilities or multiple disorders (Hasanah & Retnowati, 2017).

Among the classifications of children with special needs above, children who experience growth and development problems also require special attention. Developmental delays in children can occur in gross motor skills, fine motor skills, language and social skills, as well as children's independence; these delays can affect the child's future development (Hutasoit et al., 2022). The condition of children with developmental delays makes single mothers vulnerable to parenting stress;

this is due to the many challenges that single mothers have to face during parenting, including financial, physical, and emotional demands (Putri et al., 2022). Parenting stress is a series of processes that lead to undesirable psychological conditions and psychological reactions that arise in an effort to adapt to the demands of the role as a parent (Lestari, 2012).

Ahern (2004) defines parenting stress as excessive anxiety and tension, especially related to the role of parents and parent-child interactions. In this case, single mothers caring for children with intellectual disabilities experience anxiety and tension in fulfilling their parental role. Being a single parent makes the mother carry out two roles at once in the family, namely being a father and mother figure at the same time. The anxiety and tension felt in the form of the child's survival if he or she is no longer there. In parent-child interactions, the anxiety and tension felt in the form of difficulties experienced by the mother in understanding her child's desires. Williford (2006) states that parenting stress arises from a mismatch between the demands felt by parents and the parents' ability to fulfill these demands and negative psychological responses associated with oneself and the child as assessed by each parent.

2. Method

This research uses a research design that refers to phenomenology. The phenomenological approach is an approach that aims to study and reveal a phenomenon or experience, along with its unique context based on the subject's point of view (Herdiansyah, 2020). The procedure for taking subjects in this research used the purposive sampling method. The purposive sampling method is a sample selection method based on the characteristics of the subject so that it is in accordance with the objectives of the research being conducted (Herdiansyah, 2020). The following are several characteristics of the subjects in this research, including: 1) A mother who becomes a single parent because her partner has died, and 2) Having and caring for children alone with developmental delays.

The data collection technique used was interviews. An interview is an interaction process between two or more people to exchange information and ideas through a question and answer process, so that meaning can be constructed on a particular topic (Sugiyono, 2016). The type of interview used by researchers is a semi-structured interview, where the implementation is more free but still uses an interview guide (Sugiyono, 2016).

The data analysis technique used by researchers in this research is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), consisting of six stages, including: 1) reading and re-reading; 2) initial noting; 3) developing emergent themes; 4) searching for connection a cross emergent themes; 5) moving the next cases; and 6) looking for patterns across cases. The validity of the data is carried out to prove that the research carried out is truly scientific research, as well as to test the data obtained (Sugiyono, 2016). The data validity tests carried out include: source triangulation, technique triangulation and time triangulation.

3. Result

The results of the research show parenting stress in single mothers who care for children with delayed growth and development based on aspects including parent distress, difficult child, and parent-child dysfunctional interaction. This research attempts to look at what aspects and factors exist in parenting stress in single mothers who are caring for children with developmental delays. Based on the answers from the four research subjects, themes emerged from the subjects' statements.

1. Parent Distress

Interview results with four subjects who experienced parenting stress in caring for children with intellectual disabilities. Subjects NI, YN, NW, and A stated that being a single mother and caring for a child with delayed growth and development is very difficult; it cannot be denied that many problems occur that cause stress during parenting, child behavior that is difficult to regulate, the condition of the child being dependent on the mother. , and the absence of a life partner means that single mothers have to carry out two roles in the family, the first being a father figure to fulfill the family's needs and the second being a mother figure who cares for the children and takes care of the household. The following are the results of the interviews with the four subjects:

Subject NI said that previously his living conditions were going well, but since having a child with delayed growth and development, the feelings felt by the subject were mixed. This was because in previous children the subject child had no problems with growth and development. The child's condition with delayed growth and development and the loss of a life partner made the subject feel increasingly stressed. The following is an excerpt from the NI subject's interview:

"When you first started, it was just normal, because I didn't know he was like that. When I found out, I didn't know how I felt; it just added to my stress." "I've never been like that before with my brothers and sisters; it's like that, especially now that I'm alone; I don't have a husband anymore to take care of him; it adds to the feeling that I don't know; basically, it's an added burden to me." (NI, I4:26).

Subject YN said that initially the subject's life was fine until the subject had a second child with delays in growth and development. Since finding out about the subject's child's condition at that time, the subject was sad and did not want to have any more children, and since the departure of her late husband, the subject had to work to meet family needs. The condition of the child who is dependent on the subject makes the subject worried about the child's condition in the future. The following is an interview excerpt from subject YN:

"When I first got married, I was happy with my late husband; until I had my first child, I was still happy, just normal. And then I had my second child, who was special; we said we had to pay attention to everything. Yes, I felt sad. I feel sad; don't I think I'll be able to take care of my child, especially since I'm wondering if I'm no longer there, who will look after him? His father has already left; like, that's it. Yes, I was afraid at that time; I didn't want to have any more children." (YN, I4:14).

In subject NW, the subject said that the subject felt sad when he found out that his child was experiencing delays in growth and development, and since the departure of his partner meant that the subject had to raise the child alone, the following is an interview excerpt from subject NW:

"Yes, sad, yes, anxious. Anyway, what's clear is that it's sad, bro." (NW, W2:11)

"There are many obstacles; there are many, many possibilities. how to raise him, take care of him, everything because we need to control his needs." (NW, W2:13)

"Yes, like I said earlier, hehe, it's destiny for my children, destiny for my

husband; yes, you have to accept it, accept it even though it's hard; you have to be patient; it's also called destiny. For example, no one was asked, no one wanted it, but that's what fate said." (NW, I1:54).

Subject A said that the subject felt sad and had difficulties because the subject's economic condition was below average, the child's condition with delayed growth and development, and the departure of his life partner meant that the subject had to fulfill his living needs alone. The following is an interview excerpt from subject A:

"Our neighbor's children are cleaning up; our children are like this. Moreover, we don't have enough money, let alone more than someone's grandfather; we don't even have enough. Well, basically, our lives are really difficult, bro." (A, I1:65)

"Be ready, be ready; it's God's destiny, right, no, not be ready." But we're stressed, because we're going to take him for treatment everywhere; we don't have any money; we're looking for it; you know, we're women; how much can we get?" (A, I1:65)

2. Difficult Child

Interview results with four subjects who experienced parenting stress in caring for children with developmental delays. Subjects NI, YN, NW, and A stated that being a single mother and caring for children with developmental delays is not an easy thing, not least the child's behavior is one of the causes of stress felt by the mother. The following are the results of interviews with the four subjects:

Subject NI said that there were child behaviors that overwhelmed NI in parenting. The following is an interview excerpt from subject NI:

"His behavior is really difficult; if she wants to sulk, she doesn't know how to sulk. If he wants to be angry, he doesn't know how to be angry. He can't control his emotions. Sometimes it's hard for me to face him." He didn't want to be with his brother; if I have to work, he has to be bribed, because he really depends on me." (NI, I2:45)

Subject YN said that the behavior of the child who was very dependent on him made YN experience difficulties in parenting. The following is an excerpt from subject YN's interview:

"Ummm, like I said yesterday, he still depends on me for whatever reason. Sometimes I'm overwhelmed and tired because no matter what I'm alone with, not to mention suddenly he's throwing a tantrum on his own, I have to do what he wants. Why not? He'll be angry with me; he won't listen to what we tell him." (YN, I2:15)

Subject NW said that there was a child's behavior that made NW experience difficulties in parenting. The following is an excerpt from subject NW's interview:

"Yeah, sometimes it's like, what do we say? Sometimes he's angry and doesn't know why; sometimes he likes being angry all by himself like that. There was a time when he meant that if he was angry, throw away things that were in front of him. That's right. Then it's going to be a hassle with his brother; there's a lot of it; what can I do? He's called a little kid like that, right?" (NW, I2:27)

Subject A said that there was a child's behavior that made A experience difficulties in parenting. The following is an excerpt from Subject A's interview:

"Yes, it's like that; when I'm sewing, sometimes my child breaks the thread, breaks the crochet; if you say, watch out for the hand, watch out for the thread, he knows he's missing it. That's it; I can only sit for five minutes in the machine, and I'm already looking after my children. He likes to get angry with him; sometimes our important things are destroyed, made into toys, or thrown away." (A, I2:12)

3. Parent- Child Dysfunctional Interaction

Interview results with four subjects who experienced parenting stress in caring for children with developmental delays. Subjects NI, YN, NW, and A stated that with all the efforts made for the child's development, the hope is that the child's condition will become better than before as time goes by and the child will be able to complete simple activities alone. Following are the results of interviews with the four subjects:

Subject NI said that with the effort he had put in, his child could complete simple activities alone.

The following is an interview excerpt from Subject NI:

"My hope—if it's for development, I can't expect anything more." But I want him to be able to do it himself; he can eat by himself." (NI, I3:30). "I'm also hoping; I'm praying to Allah so that he can be better children in the future, right?" (NI, I3:34).

"Sometimes, I let him bathe alone even though it takes a long time; I tell him to eat alone; I tell him to wear his own clothes. It's possible if you don't have a mother waiting for you, right? He'll be able to practice on his own, and then he'll practice little by little; that's the way it is." (NI, I3:36)

Subject YN said that with the efforts made, it is hoped that the child's development will be better than before and will be able to complete simple activities alone. The following is an interview excerpt from subject YN:

"My hope is for his future development to be even more optimal, especially since he can take care of himself." I don't think there's anything more; I don't really hope because he can't afford it." (YN, I3:16)

"Yes, I'll just let him be independent, for example, if he wears his own clothes."
(YN, I3:19)

Subject NW said that she hoped for the best for the development of her child with the abilities, NW hopes that her children will be able to complete simple activities on their own. Following is an interview quote from subject NW:

"I also know what my child's abilities are; I really hope that my child will be able to be independent, thank God." (NW, I3:25)

"Yes, because of all his daily activities, you need to pay attention to it; that's why you need to pay attention to him, because his work is all very slow. So thank God; if he is independent, I will be happy, that's all." (NW, I3:27)

In subject A, the subject also said that with the efforts made by A, he hoped that his child would get better over time and be able to complete simple activities alone. The following is an interview quote from subject A:

"That's what we take care of as much as possible, as much as we can. We don't have much hope because we are underprivileged people. At the very least, we just remember our child; our child is looking forward to it; maybe he will know a little more, just a little bit like that. Today he knows a little bit; wait until next month; he will know a little bit, like that." (A, I2:26)

4. Discussion

Based on the results of data analysis carried out by researchers on the four subjects, the researchers conducted a discussion regarding parenting stress in single mothers who are caring for children with developmental delays. Data analysis carried out by researchers showed that the four subjects experienced parenting stress in caring for children with developmental delays. Ahern (2004) defines parenting stress as excessive anxiety and tension, especially related to the role of parents and parent-child interactions. In this case, the anxiety and tension in carrying out the role as a parent are felt by single mothers who care for children with developmental delays. Being a single parent makes the mother carry out two roles at once in the family, namely being a father and mother figure at the same time. The anxiety and tension felt in the form of the child's survival if he or she is no longer there. In parent-child interactions, anxiety and tension are felt in the form of difficulties experienced by mothers in understanding their children's desires (Ahern, 2004).

Parenting stress in single mothers who care for children with developmental delays was obtained by researchers based on aspects of parenting stress proposed by Ahern (2004), which consist of parent distress, difficult child, parent-child dysfunctional interaction, and factors consisting of parental characteristics, characteristics, and stress. situational/demographic life. Based on the interview results, parenting stress in single mothers who are caring for children with intellectual disabilities can be seen from how the four subjects described their lives while being single mothers in caring for children with developmental delays.

Parenting stress on single mothers who care for children with developmental delays based on research conducted on four subjects is how they have to continue living their lives after the departure of their partner, financial, physical, and emotional demands. Caring for children alone with limited parenting abilities makes the mother singles vulnerable to experiencing parenting stress. This supports research (Sari, Ifdil, & Yendi, 2019) stating that carrying out the role as a single parent

means experiencing significant changes in life, giving rise to many new problems that must be faced, especially for single mothers, such as economic, social, and financial problems. other household tasks that must be completed alone.

Based on the themes that emerged from the five research subjects, there was parenting stress in single mothers who were caring for children with developmental delays. The themes that emerged in the research were aspects and factors of parenting stress that occurred in the subjects. The first aspect of parenting stress, namely parent distress, refers to the feelings of stress felt by mothers in general life and stress since having children (Ahern, 2004). The results obtained from the research were that the five subjects stated that since becoming single mothers and caring for children with developmental delays, it cannot be denied that many problems have occurred which have caused stress during parenting. This is in line with research (Ramadhani & Rahmandani, 2019) which states that raising and educating children alone is not easy, especially if the child has special needs.

The second aspect of parenting stress, namely a difficult child, refers to the characteristics of the child that contribute to the parenting stress felt by the mother (Ahern, 2004). The results obtained from the research were that the four subjects stated that quite a few of the children's behaviour caused difficulties for the mother, thus becoming one of the causes of stress felt by the mother. This is in line with research (Suwoto, 2013), which states that children's characteristics can also trigger parenting stress, such as the child's health condition, child development, ability to adapt, and child behaviour.

The third aspect of parenting stress, namely parent-child dysfunctional interaction, refers to the mother's confidence in the extent to which the child meets her expectations (Ahern, 2004). The results obtained from the research were that the four subjects stated that with all the efforts they had made according to their abilities, each subject hoped that their child's condition would get better over time; at least the child would be able to complete simple activities alone. This is in line with research (Nur & Jafar, 2022), which states that every parent of a child with special needs should have realistic expectations for the child; the

child's condition and parental acceptance are special factors in forming parents' realistic expectations for the child.

Based on the results of the description of the analysis carried out by the researcher, the researcher obtained the results of what aspects are contained in parenting stress in single mothers who are caring for children with growth and development delays and what factors influence parenting stress in single mothers who are caring for children with growth and development delays. Parenting stress is in the form of excessive anxiety felt by the mother in carrying out her role as a parent when interacting with the child. The four research subjects said that the parenting stress experienced was caused by the child's condition with limited abilities in parenting, thus causing parenting stress.

Overall, the research can be concluded that the mother's condition, family support, and parenting abilities greatly influence the level of stress felt by single mothers who are caring for children with developmental delays. Research (Purnomo & Kristiana, 2016) states that the higher the social support provided by the husband, the lower the level of parenting stress felt by the wife. For single mothers, social support can be provided by the family and the environment, so that they can manage the stress experienced by the mother (Ramadhani & Rahmandani, 2019). There are various kinds of problems that will be faced, single mothers need problem-solving skills in caring for children, as an effort to adjust and adapt to problems that arise so as to reduce stress in parenting (Putri, et., al, 2022).

5. Summary

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that the four subjects have parenting stress, which can be seen through three aspects of parenting stress, namely: parent distress, difficult child, parent-child dysfunctional interaction, and factors consisting of parental characteristics, child characteristics, situational life stress/demographic. In the four subjects, the parenting stress experienced was caused by the absence of support from the family or the environment during parenting, the condition of the subject having to work to meet family needs, and the condition of the

child with delays in growth and development, making the child completely dependent on the mother with all the limited abilities they have. makes mothers vulnerable to experiencing parenting stress.

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