

The Meaning of Life of a Single Mother

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There are many challenges that must be faced by a single mother. A single mother is susceptible to stress and frustration. The purpose of this case study was to explore the meaning of life of a single mother. Data collecting method employed was in-depth interview and observation to a working mother who had been a single mother for more than 5 years. The finding of the study is the subject can overcome the challenging situation due to external and internal factors, so that the subject can develop an adaptive coping strategy. The process of life as a single mother finally leads the subject to have a positive meaning of life as a single mother that her life is to give happiness to her child and her family, and that being a single mother leads her to achieve personal maturity.

Keywords: the meaning of life, single mother

Terdapat banyak tantangan yang harus dihadapi seorang *single mother*, yang seringkali membuatnya menjadi rentan terhadap stress dan frustrasi. Studi kasus ini dilakukan dengan tujuan untuk mengeksplorasi makna hidup pada seorang *single mother*. Metode pengumpulan data adalah melalui *in-depth interview* dan observasi pada seorang ibu bekerja yang telah menjalani hidupnya sebagai *single mother* selama lebih dari 5 tahun. Kesimpulan penelitian ini adalah subjek mampu mengatasi berbagai tantangan karena adanya sejumlah faktor eksternal dan internal, sehingga subjek mampu mengembangkan strategi *coping* yang adaptif. Proses hidup sebagai seorang *single mother* akhirnya menghantarkan subjek pada pemaknaan hidup yang positif sebagai *single mother*, yaitu bahwa hidupnya adalah demi kebahagiaan anak dan keluarga, dan bahwa menjadi seorang *single mother* telah menempanya untuk mencapai kematangan pribadi.

Kata kunci: makna hidup, *single mother*

There are so many challenges that must be faced by a single mother both internally and externally. The internal challenges come up when giving birth since there are many things to be prepared, physically, mentally, and financially. Being a mother and a father at the same time for her children forces a single mother to meet various obligations independently, such as working, taking care of household matters, and bringing up the children. The external challenges involve social pressure from the society especially that of eastern culture in which moral values are highly respected, so that having a baby without a husband will be criticized. Besides, negative stigma is always associated with single parent status, especially the unmarried ones. The basic reason why people had such a negative judgment to single parent according to Diputro, Novita and Carolina (2008) was due to religious teaching that disagreed with single parent phenomenon and the assumption that children brought

up by single parents would have nastier attitude than those brought up by complete parents.

Some studies discussed the topic of single mother associated the status with various aspects of life, such as health, mental health, child upbringing, and profession. The study with health topic entitled "Single Mother": Their Health and Health Service Use was done by Beatson-Hird, Yuen, and Balarajan (1989) using 6,440 mothers divided into several categories based on their professions (housewife, unemployed, working mother) and status (married, never been married/single mother, divorced, separated due to death of her spouse). The result of study shows that percentage of acute illness and chronic illness is mostly experienced by those mothers who separated from their spouse due to death and divorced mothers compared with those married and never been married mothers. The stressful situation that comes up when facing the death of their spouse or the divorce significantly affects the health of mothers. It is proven from the point of view of working mothers that they tend to be healthier than those unemployed mothers or housewife mothers. The responsibility to their work that

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